“Eastern Europe”, “Balkanism” and “European-ness” in the works of Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić

by

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I, Anamaria Remete confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The thesis proposes a critical reading of the discourse of “Europe” and “European-ness”. I argue eastern European writers have internalized the imagery reproduced by these discourses in which “Eastern Europe” is cast as an inferior Other. With a postcolonial critique in mind I propose a critical reading of the works of two contemporary east European writers and intellectuals, Romanian Gabriel Liiceanu and Croatian Slavenka Drakulić.

Intellectuals in eastern Europe have had a curious mix of responses to the discourse of “Eastern Europe” from acceptance, resistance, adaptation, transformation to rejection of “Europe”, “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”. They have crafted distinctly-new sites of resistance and post-socialist subjectivities, modes of inhabiting and belonging to contested geographies that previous paradigms have failed to properly capture.

I argue that Liiceanu and Drakulić’s writings reveal the contested and enduring relationship that east European intellectuals have had with the idea of “Europe”. Their accounts complicate the image of a neatly divided Europe, and challenge the idea of a coherent and stable East and West.

Liiceanu and Drakulić participate as agents in negotiating the idea of “Europe”. These texts are spaces in which intellectuals and political elites imagine Europe and their place in the world, articulate an entirely distinct vocabulary of belonging and exclusion. Discussing their writing provides an opportunity to challenge the construction of the idea of “Europe”.

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Chapter I Background and Problematizing "Europe"

What is meant by the name "Europe"? There are multiple answers to this question. First, Europe is a continent, a geographical place. Secondly, the name refers to the political and economic alliance that was once the "European Community" but is now the European Union. Thirdly, "Europe" invokes the mythological Greek character Europa. These, and further meanings of Europe, coalesce into a single atemporal monolithic understanding in documents such as the "Declaration on European Identity" drafted at the 1973 Copenhagen EU Summit. In this Declaration a variety of traditions and heritages are subsumed and collapsed into a single "framework of European civilization".[1] This process has resulted in an enduring and problematic legacy[2] of meaning-construction and an idea of "Europe".[3]

The geographical representation of countries into "West" and "East" is supposedly "objective". Influential writers such as Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers have used "Western" and "Eastern" to differentiate between people from the "West" and the "East". In this process the "West" became a signifier for "civilization" while the "East" became a signifier for a land discovered by the enlightened "West". In this relationship the "East" became the object as seen in the Republic of Letters.[4] Throughout history the binary "West"/"East" has taken various guises.

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1 European Union, European Political Co-operation (PEC), 'Declaration on European Identity', Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, 1988, Paragraph 3. Fifth Edition Press and Information Office.

2 See Paul Valéry, 'La Crise de l'Esprit,' *Variété I, Letters* (Paris: 1919). I further elaborate on the intellectual engagements with the idea of "Europe" in Chapter III.

3 For a critical reading of the idea of "Europe" as a constructed concept see Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995); Anthony Pagden, *The Idea of Europe. From Antiquity to the European Union,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Bo Stråth, *Europe and the Other. Europe as the Other,* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

4 See Larry Wolff, 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe: Toward a Literary Sociology of Continental Division,' *Slavic Review,* 54 (Winter, 1995): 932–42; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), an Edward Said-inspired work on the "Orientalization" of "Eastern Europe".

During the Renaissance Catholic "West" stood in contrast to a backward rural Orthodox "East".[5] During the eighteenth century "West" corresponded to "Les Lumières" while "East" signified a space of shadows, awaiting to be enlightened.[6] Finally, in the twentieth century during the Cold War there was a division, an Iron Curtain, between the so-called "Free World" and the "Communist Block". However, at the end of the Cold War and the fall of communist regimes contrasting ideas about what "Europe" is remained. These contrasting views, including ideas about politics, and philosophy, are reflected in the writings of Milan Kundera, György Konrád, Adam Michnik and Czeslaw Milosz from Eastern Europe.[7] In west European countries "Europe" was understood as the European Union. In the countries that constitute the eastern side of the continent, "Europe" represented what Tony Judt called "a necessary myth".[8] In this latter vision "Europe" signified an idealized homeland.[9]

In *Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe,* Costica Bradatan argues that the difference between understandings of what "Europe" signifies in the "West" and "East" runs deep.[10] He suggests that it is not uncommon for writers from eastern and western Europe to share a perception that there is an intellectual divide between the two parts of the continent.[11] The ideas and preoccupations of east European intellectuals may not necessarily be in dialogue with their western

5 For a primary source supporting this view see Daniel Chirot, *The Origins of backwardness in Eastern Europe: economics and politics from the Middle Ages until the early twentieth century,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). I engage critically with "Europe", "West" and "East" in Chapter III.

6 See Wolff, 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe'.

7 See Milan Kundera, 'Un Occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale', *Le Débat,* 27 (1983): 3–23 [English version: 'The Tragedy of Central Europe']; Gyorgy Konrád, *Melancholy Of Rebirth*: *Essays From Post-Communist Central Europe, 1989-1994* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995)*;* Adam Michnik, 'What Europe means for Poland,' *Journal of Democracy*, 14, (2003): 128-36*;* Czesław Milosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition,* trans. Catherine S. Leach (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968).

8 See Tony Judt, 'The Rediscovery of Central Europe', *Daedalus* 119, 1 (1990): 23–54.

9 See Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, 'Common European Home Vision Revisited: 'Return to Europe' as an Anticommunist and Transformational Device,' *Social Science Research Network* (SSRN) (December 2009). Available at https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1557722

10 For a critical reading and in-depth discussion see Costica Bradatan, 'Introduction: Philosophy, Geography, Fragility' in *Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe,* ed. Costica Bradatan (London: Routledge, 2012)

11 See Andrei Plesu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Horia-Roman Patapievici, 'Cuvânt înainte. Noua Cortina de Fier a Memoriei', in *O idee care ne suceşte minţile,* ed. Plesu, Liiceanu and Patapievici (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014)*,* 7-8.

counterparts. According to Bradatan, east European writers and Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Czeslaw Milosz and Krzysztof Kieslowski identify the lack of intellectual dialogue[12] Bradatan argues in his discussion of "precariousness" and East-Central Europe's intellectual self-representation, that these writers construct a vision of the "West" as sole producer of intellectual ideas whereas the "East" is dialectically fashioned as a passive recipient.[13]Bradatan explains that this act of construction/fabrication is the result of "metaphysical discomfort", an incapacity to come to terms with self-definition.[14] I propose that this incapacity is the result of an internalisation of Otherness, or what other scholars call "self-colonisation"; both concepts I discuss in detail in Chapter II. When this process of self-colonisation occurs "Eastern Europe" and its people continue to be an object of study rather than agents that can produce knowledge, even about itself. Moreover, the idea of "Europe" means different things for western and eastern intellectuals after the fall of communist regimes.[15]

According to Vişniec, many western intellectuals had abandoned the idea of "Europe" as an integrated cultural space.[16] The necessity of establishing a common understanding and dialogue on what constitutes "Europe" re-emerged after the fall of communist regimes, as evident in a series of intellectual debates including those between Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida.[17] In his *Rediscovery of Central Europe*, Judt argued that postsocialist narratives on the memory of communism together with nostalgia for the idea of "Europe" have resulted in an idealized vision of "Europe" in the intellectual circles of eastern Europe.[18] Following the fall of communist regimes a

12 Bradatan, 'Introduction', 2-4.
13 Bradatan, 1.
14 Bradatan, 2.
15 Bradatan, 2.
16 See Matei Vişniec, 'Dialog cu Matei Vişniec: Să vorbim altfel despre Europa', interview Radio France Internationale, 9 January 2017 (Available at http://www.rfi.ro/dialog-92315-matei-Vişniec -europa).
17 See Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, 'February 15 or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe', *Constellations – Oxford*, 10, 3 (2003): 291-297; Matthias Flatscher, 'Different Ways to Europe: Habermas and Derrida', in *Europe Beyond Universalism and Particularism,* ed. Susanna Lindberg, Mika Ojakangas and Sergei Prozorov (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 84–99.
18 See Judt, 'The Rediscovery of Central Europe'; Timothy Garton Ash, 'Mitteleuropa?', *Daedalus* 119, 1 (1990): 1–21.

number of individuals, victims' associations and public intellectuals initiated a series of transitional justice and memory construction actions aimed at repairing past injustices carried out by the regime. These actions contributed to the creation of a so-called public memory in the postsocialist period. The idea of "Europe" as culture is a shared view in eastern Europe. This view is foregrounded in Bogdan Radica's interwar appeal to European intellectuals in "Agonija Europe" or Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida's appeal for a common European core.[19] While the theoretical concerns of these writers differ, they share a concern that may be formulated as follows: "Europe" exists, the "European project" must be saved from crisis and it is the task of its intellectual-guardians to see to that.[20] Milan Kundera's essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe", addressed to a Western audience, is a textbook example of an east European writer attempting to salvage an ideal of "Europe". The essay appealed to eastern European intellectuals who saw in Kundera's message a way of re-claiming their relevance and legitimacy as "European intellectuals".[21]

To this day, divergent interpretations of the idea of "Europe" and the experience of communism exist between "Western" intellectuals who have not experienced communism and "Eastern" intellectuals who have lived with communism. For instance, only dissident intellectuals in eastern Europe interpret the memory and legacy of the 1989 revolutions as a "return to Europe".[22] This difference in interpretation is relevant because it reveals a gap between "Western" and "Eastern" narratives on "Europe". Nataša Kovačević suggests, narratives which propose a "European" or

19 Zoran Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*. *The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill/Rodopi, 2011), 7–10; see Habermas and Derrida, 'February 15 or What Binds Europeans Together'.

20 Here Habermas's concept of European federalism and 'public sphere' coincide. For a critical reading of Habermas see Nancy Fraser 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,' *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

21 For a critical overview of the reception of Milan Kundera's essay and the polemics that ensued see Jonathan Bousfield, 'Growing up in Kundera's Central Europe', *New Eastern Europe*, 2 (2014): 123–29; Leonidas Donskis, 'I Remember, Therefore I Am: Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe' in *Yet Another Europe After 1984: Rethinking Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe,* ed. Donskis (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill/Rodopi, 2012).

22 Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'Rethinking 1989' in *End and the Beginning: The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History,* ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu with Bogdan C. Iacob (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2012) 21-2.

“civilizational” ideal as essentially liberal-democratic against a non-European “Oriental” communism run the grave risk of misrepresenting the past. Kovačević argues that “the establishment of this discourse has helped to justify transitions to market economy and liberal-civic society in post-communism”, it provincializes eastern Europe “by suppressing its communist histories and legacies, placing it in an economically and politically subordinate position with respect to the EU.”[23] While accepting Kovačević’s point, I suggest that while adherence to idealized visions of “Europe” was a resistance strategy during communism the post-regime period witnessed a resurgence of “European” ideals.[24] After the fall of communist regimes dissident and non-dissident intellectuals needed to reconfigure their position in the newly-established democratic societies. As part of their effort to gain legitimation and recognition, intellectuals utilized attachment to so-called “European” values to foreground their anticommunist commitment and desire for democracy.[25] In support of this view I turn to the Romanian-French writer Matei Vişniec’s comment that critiques of “Europe” and “Europe’s” place in the world are exaggerated, fashionable and above all unjustified, so that “instead of defending our common house [Europe] we are deconstructing it.”[26] In Vişniec’s view “Europe” is cast as a fortress under threat that needs saving and protection; though it is not entirely clear from what or from whom. As Vladimir Tismaneanu explains the “besieged fortress” trope together with narratives of salvation re-emerged in postcommunist eastern Europe.[27] Vişniec’s view is not an isolated case by any means. In their works and public engagements, many east European intellectuals voice similar views.[28]

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23 Nataša Kovačević, *Civilization’s W’ild East: Narrating Eastern Europe’s communism and post-communism,* (University of Florida: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2006), abstract V – VI.

24 For a primary source on resistance during communism as an adherence to an ideal of “Europe” see Horia-Roman Patapievici, *Zbor în bătaia săgeţii:Eseu asupra formării* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002); for a critical source on the role of “Europe” in the anticommunist dissident corpus see Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

25 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, ‘Fighting for the Public Sphere: Democratic Intellectuals under Postcommunism’ in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* ed. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2000).

26 Matei Vişniec, ‘Dialog cu Matei Vişniec: Să vorbim altfel despre Europa’, interview Radio France Internationale, 9 January 2017 (Available at http://www.rfi.ro/dialog-92315-matei-Vişniec -europa).

27 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009).

28 See Adam Michnik, ‘What Europe Means for Poland’, *Journal of Democracy* 14, 4 (2003): 128–136.

The uneasiness of the relationship between eastern and western European intellectuals manifests in unequal circulation of ideas about eastern Europe from western Europe. Despite the fact that contemporary historians take a transnational and comparative historical approach to studying the recent European past, there are obvious differences between western and eastern intellectual accounts. While western-produced ideas are regularly debated and discussed in eastern Europe, little is known in the west regarding the production of knowledge, intellectual debates or the ideas preoccupying eastern European intellectuals.[29] As Costica Bradatan argues, "it is as if the intellectual traffic between East and West within Europe can only be one way: as if works of art and thought, ideas and intelligence can move only eastwards."[30] Bradatan deplores the scarcity of knowledge and lack of interest in the intellectual background of well-known eastern European intellectuals, and the unique blend of concerns, challenges and ethical imperatives that shaped their thinking. In a bitter tone, Bradatan writes, "In a certain sense, it is as though these people come from nowhere, the offspring of the East European nothingness that they are."[31] Bradatan's critical approach is similar to that of other scholars who have also observed a lack of engagement with regional intellectual traditions, particular histories and political cultures.[32] Nataša Kovačević, scholar of English language and literature, counteracts this lack of engagement with east European texts by challenging the already existing scholarship on eastern Europe. To this end Kovačević sets aside Western historical, sociological and literary texts about the region and suggests utilizing local sources instead.[33] Knowledge about "Eastern Europe" produced by non-east Europeans often lacks insight into the peculiarities of the region by utilizing a toolkit of concepts and ideas external to the region.[34] For example, scholar Robert Kaplan points to the ahistorical manner in which political analysts and scholars have interpreted the wars that caused the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Kaplan

29 Bradatan, 'Introduction', 1.
30 Bradatan, 1.
31 Bradatan, 1.
32 See Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
33 See Kovačević, *Civilization's Wild East: Narrating Eastern Europe's Communism and Post-communism*.'
34 See ed. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Wim van Meurs, *Ottomans into Europeans: State and Institution Building in South-Eastern Europe* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 2010).

suggests that such interpretations are part of a tradition that easily assigns labels to eastern and south-eastern European cultures. Within this viewpoint contemporary east European phenomena are read as "age-old" ethnic hatred of its people as undeveloped and historically backward. I argue that such interpretations are expressions of bias towards the region and indicate a poor knowledge its people and history.[35]

I argue that engagements with the idea of "Europe" and "Eastern Europe" play a distinctive role in the eastern European intellectual environment. In particular, reading semi-autobiographical works and life-writings of east-European intellectuals can be useful for understanding how eastern European intellectuals engage with the idea of "Europe" and its shifting geography.[36]

Larry Wolff's work explaining the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment and how this contributed to the creation of an apparently atemporal, unchanging, homogeneous entity called "Eastern Europe" is helpful in understanding the problematic legacy of knowledge-production about "Eastern Europe". Inspired by Edward Said's seminal text, *Orientalism*, Wolff's own work identifies a tendency to understand "Eastern Europe" in terms of the colonialist experience of western European empires.[37] This included intellectuals adopting the terminology identified by Said – "primitive", "tribal", "backward", "underdeveloped", "uncivilized" or "lagging behind" – to express and attribute features of exotica and fantasy to Eastern Europe. Wolff's analysis reveals that, as with European empires' gaze and representations of overseas colonies as theorised by Said, "Eastern Europe" needed to be "discovered" by an external – West European – gaze in order to be

35 See Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: Vintage books, 1994); Robert D. Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow. Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* (Random House, 2016); G. Scott Davis, *Religion and Justice in the War over Bosnia* (London: Routledge,1996).

36 See Emil Cioran, *Pe culmiile disperării* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993); Imre Kertesz, *Fatelessness* (New York: Vintage International, 2004); Habermas and Derrida, 'February 15 or What Binds Europeans Together'. For a critical reading see Milutinović, *Getting over Europe. The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture*; Wendy Bracewell, *Orientations. An anthology of East European travel writing, ca. 1550-2000* (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2009).

37 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*

recognised. This process of discovery obscured an array of different cultures and traditions and subsumed them under a single homogenising entity, labelled "Eastern Europe". The operations that are utilized in this process and the assumptions upon which the process are based echo Etienne Balibar's "fictive ethnicity" and fabrication of "ethnicity".[38] The process of imagining and creating a monolithic "Eastern Europe" can be understood through Balibar's process of fabrication. The people of "Eastern Europe" are thus imagined and constructed as a single continuous natural community which stretches unaltered across history.[39]

1 Internalization of Otherness

I argue that within the process of self-identification and self-representation intellectuals from eastern Europe have internalized the discourse of "Eastern Europe" as an inferior Other to "Europe" proper.[40] "Internalization" as used here is termed, by scholars studying very similar processes in the region, as either "self-colonization" or "reinscription of Otherness".[41] Internalization of Otherness or "self-colonisation" is a manner of explaining the process whereby Eastern European elites adopt, accept, legitimize and, ultimately, judge and measure their own cultures and societies against a so-called European model. In other words, the process of uncritical adoption and reproduction of the discourse of "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" by Eastern European elites is effectively a process of internalization of Otherness.[42] Expressions of internalization can be read in the remarkable endurance of the themes of historical and geographical determinism in the

38 Etienne Balibar, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology' in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel M. Wallerstein *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* (London/New York: Verso, 1991), 86–106.
39 Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 96.
40 See Merje Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe', *Progress in Human Geography* 28, 4 (August 2004): 472–89.
41 For a wider discussion on the concept of "self-colonization" see Alexsander Kiossev, 'Notes on the Self-Colonizing Cultures,' in Dimitŭr Ginev, Francis Sejersted and Kostadinka Simeonova, *Cultural aspects of the modernization process* (Oslo: TMV-senteret, 1995). For a discussion on "inscription of Otherness" see Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion'. I elaborate on both concepts in the final part of Chapter III.
42 I develop on and problematize the discourses of "European-ness", inventing "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" in Chapter III.

contemporary writing on eastern Europe.[43] Writers from the "Other Europe" engage with the themes and tropes of "bad geography", of belonging to the problematic territory of "Eastern Europe".[44] Their desired objective thus becomes belonging to a 'real', that is, Western Europe. What is interesting to take note of here is that despite the change of context and historical epoch, contemporary intellectuals in central and eastern Europe engage uncritically with a vocabulary that they inherited from previous generations of intellectuals. By doing so they become agents in their own process of Otherness and Orientalization.[45]

I believe that by examining the work of writers from east European postsocialist societies, we can understand how contemporary writers and intellectuals from the region contribute to the discussions of domination, dependency and western-produced epistemology over eastern European cultures and societies.

First, the life-writing of contemporary writers from eastern Europe including Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu reveal the contested and enduring relationship that east European intellectuals have had with the idea of "Europe".

Secondly, these accounts complicate the image of a neatly divided Europe. As such, they have something complex and nuanced to say about imagining and engaging with the idea of "Europe" and "European-ness", thus providing alternatives to essentialist or reductionist narratives. Reading life-writing and semi-autobiographical work from east European writers can provide an insight into the complicated and conflictual experience of living in liminal spaces, the periphery of "Europe" or the "Other" Europe. Writers such as Emil Cioran, Andrzej Stasiuk or Merab Mamardashvili, who

43 See Bradatan, *Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe.*

44 See ed. Philip Roth, *Writers from the Other Europe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978).

45 See Alexander Kiossev, 'The Self-Colonizing Metaphor', in *Cultural Aspects of the Modernisation Process*; Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion'; Olga B. Bartosiewicz, 'Fundoianu și spiritul imitativ în cultura română: între autocolonizarea și autonomizarea literaturii,' *Philologica Jassyensia* 14, 1 (January 2018): 15–28.

engage with the notion of "Europe" and with the dilemmas and tensions of inhabiting the margins, challenge myths of unity or stability regarding the idea of "Europe", and bring to the fore new themes including language, homeland, spatial and cultural belonging and the borderland as an opportunity for emancipation from an Eurocentric discourse of belonging. Emil Cioran's writings reveal the intellectual trajectory of a man who chose to relinquish his mother tongue in order to fashion a new path for himself.[46] There are numerous interpretations to Cioran's choice of linguistic deracination, especially so because deracination is a key feature in Cioran's life and philosophy. According to Marta Petreu, his choice to relinquish his mother tongue represented a symbolic act of separation from what he saw as the failed spiritual renewal of the Romanian people.[47] Andrzej Stasiuk's writings inspire potential avenues for disrupting the discourse of "Europe" and "Eastern Europe" from the margins and for challenging notions of capitalism and Western modernity.[48] Merab Mamardashvili offers the concept of borderland as a space of "in-between-ness", a bridge between West and East.[49] These are but a few examples of what life writing from eastern European writers provide to debates about "Europe", "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism".

Thirdly, east European life writing is an example of writers' active participation as agents negotiating the idea of "Europe". These accounts are both sites and instruments through which intellectuals and political elites imagine Europe and their place in the world, using a vocabulary of belonging and exclusion. The stories that they tell have a targeted audience at home and abroad and serve various purposes. Writers engage with the assigned label of "East-European backwardness"

46 See Emil Cioran, *Pe culmile disperării.*
47 See Marta Petreu *An Infamous Past: E.M. Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).
48 See Andrzej Stasiuk, *On the Road to Babadag. Travels in the Other Europe,* trans. Michael Kandel (London: Vintage, 2012).
49 See Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, 'Poststructuralism in Georgia: The Phenomenology of the "Objects-centaurs" of Merab Mamardashvili', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 15, 3 (2010): 27–39; for an ample critical reading of Merab Mamardashvili's philosophy see the entire dedicated issue 'The Unbearable Charm of Fragility. Philosophizing in/on Eastern Europe', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 15, 3 (2010).

by contesting or internalising it, emulating or rejecting the “European” ideal, or by crafting a distinctly unique eastern European identity within this negotiation process.[50]

Fourthly, these writers are active agents in the invention of “Europe”, and in a process of re-invention of the Self since emulating a “Europe” that attracts and excludes is not an easy task. An investigation into their self-image and self-representation as east Europeans is an opportunity to challenge the construction of the idea of “Europe” and the ambiguous east European space.[51] Travel writing provides an opportunity to question the “Otherness” of “Eastern Europe” and reveal points of tension and vulnerability.[52] The east European space does not lend itself to easy theorization, not even as an etymologically-dominated category of knowledge.[53] The terminology writers used to label Eastern Europe borrows heavily from the colonialist experience. Travel writers and others employ similar tropes of exoticism to those used by the West to describe ‘new’ cultures and societies; thus associating the east European Other with the Asian and African Other. While it cannot be said that the importance and outcome of such processes are similar, it certainly helped to create and reinforce notions of European difference and hierarchy.[54] More importantly, the application of Orientalist tropes poses a problem in the process of identity-construction. Labels such as “semi-Oriental”, “semi-Asian”, “semi-barbarous” problematize discourses regarding the origin of “Europe” and its uncertain geographical borders.[55] Eastern European intellectuals’ self-representation is metaphorically constructed as a bridge, a point of connection between Europe and Asia, a state of in-between-ness between a desired “West” and a rejected “East”.

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50 See Milica Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia’ *Slavic Review* 54, 4 (1995): 917–31.
51 See Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other*: *“The East” in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) [Borderlines Series, Volume 9].
52 See Stasiuk, *On the Road to Babadag.*
53 See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
54 See Bracewell, *Orientations.*
55 See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*

2 “Nesting Orientalism”, historical determinism and uneasy identifications

Intellectuals in eastern Europe such as Andrzej Stasiuk, Merab Mamardashvili, Milan Kundera and Ceszlaw Milosz just to name a few have produced a curious mix of responses to the discourse of “Eastern Europe”.[56] Their responses range from acceptance, resistance, adaptation and transformation to rejection. Indeed, Milica Bakić-Hayden has termed one type of local engagement with the discourse of “Europe” and “Eastern Europe” as “nesting Orientalism”. “Nesting Orientalism” is a political discourse used in eastern Europe to describe how cultures and societies are continuously being shifted further east for the purpose of securing one’s own “European-ness”.[57] “Nesting Orientalism” and its discourses of belonging and exclusion reinforce categories of Otherness on an increasingly fragmented and complicated symbolic map of Europe.[58] For instance, those who have constructed a distinctive category of “Central Europe” wish to “save” certain societies from being categorized as “Eastern Europe” and propose their inclusion further West. In a similar manner the category of “South-East Europe” is used by those wanting to avoid the now derogatory label, “Balkan”. The category of “East-Central Europe” suggests a shift from East to West in an attempt to renounce belonging to “Eastern Europe”. Finally, “Western Balkans” can be read as an attempt to reject belonging to the “Balkans” and assert a certain “European-ness” by the use of the appellation “Western”. In the end they are all categories of distinctiveness aimed at highlighting the exoticism of a neighbouring region, usually in the East, in order to affirm their own “European-ness”. The process of “Othering” Eastern neighbours is usually based on religious grounds (Catholic or Protestant religion is attributed to “Western” tradition whereas Christian-Orthodox is usually relegated to an “Eastern” tradition) or on linguistic grounds (Latin or German-

56 See Stasiuk, *On the Road to Babadag*; Milan Kundera, ‘Un Occident kidnappé;’ see Milosz, *Native Realm*.
57 See Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms’.
58 By “symbolic” I intend the notion utilised by Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden in ‘Orientalist Variations on the Theme “Balkans”: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics’, *Slavic Review* 51, 1 (1992): 1–15. See also László Kontler in ‘Introduction: Reflections on Symbolic Geography,’ *European Review of History*, 6, 1 (1999): 9–14 .

speaking societies and cultures are "Western" whereas Slavic dialects are relegated to the "East"). Markers of inclusion and exclusion are endless. Othering extends to exoticizing historical periods and cultural heritages; for instance, the Byzantine and the Ottoman heritage are downplayed or denied to assert a closer vicinity to and affinity with western European culture.[59]

In their engagement with the discourse of "Europe" and "Eastern Europe" east European life writers challenge historical and geographical determinism. Numerous narratives describe eastern European space in terms of fatality. Eastern European societies were caught up in the longstanding struggle for power between western European empires and the Russian empire. This struggle manifested in conflict throughout history, culminating in the twentieth century with Communist and Fascist regimes using eastern Europe as their playground[60]. The idea of eastern Europe as fought over and played with is a commonplace perspective on historical events in eastern Europe. Scholar Costica Bradatan argues: "For the Eastern European, historical disasters not only happen but do so on a regular basis – they keep happening so stubbornly that their occurrence ceases to be seen as accidental and becomes part and parcel of life."[61] Bradatan explains that intellectual ideas stemming from this pessimistic worldview develop into a metaphysical view of history as a tragic process that results in "metaphysical discomfort", and an incapacity to accept a stable definition of the self.[62] The affects of this "metaphysical discomfort" are expressed in numerous ways, including feelings and attitudes of dislocation, or "deracination". This was the case for existentialist philosopher Emil Cioran who reflected on: the desire to erase one's roots; nihilism; life as a condition of tragedy; fragility as a recurrent feature; and, the impossibility of having a fixed stable essence.[63] Analysis of

59 I discuss "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" in detail in Chapter II.
60 See Plesu, Patapievici, Liiceanu, *O idee care ne suceste mintile.*
61 Bradatan, 'Introduction', 3.
62 Bradatan, 2.
63 For "deracination" see Emil Cioran *Pe culmile disperării* translated as *On the Heights of Despair,* trans. Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

these intellectual engagements reveal a key problematic insofar as they offer an essentialist understanding of the idea of “Europe” and “Eastern Europe”.

3 Theoretical basis

I draw on Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis, Edward Said’s critique of power dominance and representation, and Hayden White’s thesis on the exclusionary nature of identity-processes for my interrogation of “Europe”. I question the enduring legacy that shaped a specific understanding of “Europe” and eastern Europe space. I argue that we need a nuanced and accurate understanding of the ways in which past knowledge production about “Eastern Europe” continues to influence intellectuals vision Europe’s cultural and geographical identity.

To do this I analyse narratives containing the themes of self-designation and self-representation and investigate how they relate to patterns of “Otherness”. I argue for a need to critically rethink scholars consideration and engagement with the intellectual/cultural inheritances of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. I suggest the efforts of writers from eastern Europe, particularly Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu, to negate, diminish, deny or exclude this heritage reveals internalization of negative images of the Self. References to the Byzantine and Ottoman empires in the historiography of eastern Europe are problematic as intellectuals as well as academics downplay the legacy of these empires.[64] Many Europeans regard Ottoman or Byzantine heritage as belittling and thus to be denied or overcome. This is an all-too-common theme in the “escape from the Balkans”[65]. Such denial and self-effacement necessitates a re-interrogation of the ways in which Europe’s multiple cultural traditions are cast in narratives about the past. There is a need to

64 See Mungiu-Pippidi and van Meurs, *Ottomans into Europeans.*

65 Adrian Cioroianu, ‘The impossible escape: Romanians and the Balkans’, in *Balkan as metaphor: between globalization and fragmentation*, ed. Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 209–234.

investigate the traditions that have contributed to discourses of cultural, political and scientific domination. In the eastern European intellectual milieu there has been a process of internalization of "Otherness", so that the discourse on "the invention of Eastern Europe" as Larry Wolff terms it, continues to shape local self-identifications. It follows that an analysis of the historical themes and sources of self-perception is therefore necessary. It is necessary to challenge narratives that essentialize. In an effort to de-essentialize the way we consider the idea of "Europe" and "European-ness" I approach these constructions not as atemporal, unchanging, homogeneous and monolithic concepts, but as highly contextualized and instrumentalized discourses. This study thus proposes a deconstruction of "European-ness" as a concept through a critical reading of the institutions that produce it. To do this, the research focuses on the various actors, the discursive strategies they employ, their mechanisms, the processes that construct "European-ness" and the main themes that mark its reception in the post-socialist intellectual milieu.

In this thesis I am interested in understanding how belonging is articulated in imagined spaces, how elements from the legacy of the Enlightenment shape self-identifications in eastern Europe and, in particular, how intellectuals in the area engage with the discourse of "Europe". I ask: What kind of intellectual responses do we find in their writings? Do they accept, adopt, change, transform, contest or emulate the idea of "Europe" as a set of values? What terminology do they use? What traditions do they draw on to articulate their position? What tropes, images, practices do eastern European intellectuals engage with to advance their views?

Enlightenment knowledge of Eastern Europe influenced the selection of historical narratives that formed the basis of national ideologies and state-building projects of the nation-states of the region. Moreover, this process is not restricted to the past, it strengthened during and after the Cold War as pre-established categories, such as "Balkanism" and "Eastern Europe" conceptualized as

homogeneous unchanging entities, continued to serve as explanations for present economic and political events. It is evident that externally-produced knowledge about the "East" – in this case, western Europe's Other on the continent, eastern Europe – has had enduring influence on local self-perceptions and self-representations. "European-ness" is clearly an identity-construction process based on categories of exclusiveness that have been internalized by eastern European intellectuals. The logic of identity processes that transform, through the discursive means of naming and creating value-categories is key to the argument I advance. To make this case I explore the themes and narratives of belonging and self-representation of eastern European intellectuals.

To map out this intellectual landscape the work of two writers from eastern Europe, Romanian writer Gabriel Liiceanu and the Croatian writer, Slavenka Drakulić are offered as my "case authors". I have chosen these two writers because of their shared historical and political backgrounds, and because in their writing they offer different intellectual engagements with the idea of Europe. Both Drakulić and Liiceanu as intellectuals have been shaped by similar cultural backgrounds. They both come from societies that have experienced relatively similar regime changes and common patterns of state-building. They come from marginal east European societies that have: constantly shifted between western and eastern European empires; experienced fascism, social division, ethnic conflict; a common belonging to the unique intellectual blend of central Europe; shared history in communist regimes, and the experience of resistance and survival as intellectuals in these totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless their writings express quite divergent views on the idea of "Europe". While for Liiceanu "Europe" stands for high-culture to be carefully nurtured, preserved and passed on to future generations, for Drakulić "Europe" is an increasingly problematic idea that is foreign to the postsocialist challenges her society had to face. The cultural landscapes that the two writers describe reveal their differing views on what "Europe" has to offer for the future of their societies. For Liiceanu, "European-ness" is expressed as an ideal that

Romanian culture and society needs to aspire to, while for Drakulić "Europe" with all its promises for a better future seems to have been a chimera of the past, a spell that we need to get over in order to build new societies.

In this thesis I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's analytic concept of "field" as a guideline to reading the texts. For me, the concept of "field" is useful, as it offers the possibility of integrating relations of power in the analysis. I examine recurring tropes and images of "Europe", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" as central factors in the two writers' narratives of self-identification in their works of fiction and non-fiction. I read the writers' work comparatively because they share critical perspectives, albeit different, on political and ideological processes of nineteenth century state-building, nationalist ideologies and communist regimes[66]. My approach is sensitive to historical context to ensure that reiterations of essentialist and homogeneous ahistorical beliefs are avoided.

4 Chapter Outline

The following three chapters, II, III and IV represent a discussion of the theoretical framework, scholarly debates and a presentation of the knowledge produced on eastern European societies and cultures. Chapters V, VI and VII represent the interpretation of the texts based on the three thematic focuses I discuss in Chapter II.

Chapter II establishes a theoretical framework drawing on postcolonial theory and postcommunist studies. I argue that a postcolonial critique can open up research questions and provide a new focus and vocabulary for studying east European life-writing during communism and its aftermath. The

66 For a reading on what the comparative perspective entails in a historical research study see Janowski Maciej, Constantin Iordachi and Trencsenyi Balazs, 'Why bother about historical regions?: Debates over central Europe in Hungary, Poland and Romania', *East Central Europe,* 32 (2005): 5-58.

chapter argues that old research themes such as subjectivities, memory and resistance should be re-considered through a postcolonial lens. Despite the Totalitarian Paradigm's usefulness in some aspects of the field of postsocialist studies it nevertheless presents significant limitations in its overly-ambitious agenda to capture all experiences. The Totalitarianism Paradigm has greatly contributed to our understanding of a wide range of phenomena pertaining to totalitarian regimes: the nature of both right and left-wing twentieth century ideologies, their interplay with traditional power, the shift from revolutionary movements to Party legitimation, state-building and societal transformations, large-scale changes in social mobility, re-writing national histories, personality cults and assigning new social roles for citizens newly-established regimes.

Chapter III provides an in-depth discussion and problematization of the discourses on the idea of "Europe", including the various epochs and contexts in which "Europe", "Eastern Europe" and the "Balkans" were (re)created discursively. It discusses recurring themes such as the myth of unity, continuity, tradition, civilization, modernity and progress. The discussion begins with a critique of "Europe" as *Respublica Christiana* through which I highlight the role this myth plays in legitimizing the idea of a common European past and a reference point for "European" unity and invention of tradition.[67] The chapter then confronts the idea of "Europe" as "civilization" within the Age of the Enlightenment. I centre my discussion on the elements, mechanisms and discursive practices that establish the idea of "Europe as civilization".

It is in Chapter III that I discuss the influence the development of natural sciences had on contemporary understandings of "Europe". I argue that flawed understandings of "Europe" are exacerbated by problematic and sometimes uncontested legacies of the Enlightenment. The type of knowledge-production practices that were constitutive of "Europe", "Eastern Europe" and the

67 See ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

“Balkans” continue to inform academic interpretations of historical phenomena to this day, making a problematization of the matter timely. A discussion of the nineteenth century discourse on the idea of “Europe”, including how teleological notions of History and Progress, were used as discursive and rhetorical devices to advance nation-building projects in eastern and south-eastern Europe is undertaken. The discussion of interwar Europe both as a historical period and as a discourse that supports the more general discourse of “Europe” as a set of ideals is advanced. Intellectuals claim the significance of this period in a variety of ways, including as a reference-point to denote European cosmopolitanism, intercultural and religious tolerance. Other intellectuals look to this period for its expressions of cultural angst, and rising popular frustration expressed in *Völkisch* movements, intense discrimination and antisemitism. My reading of this period reveals that nostalgia for the past and idealization leads to selective narratives on the idea of “Europe”. Finally, the chapter explores the Cold War ideological discourse on “Europe” and “European-ness” as a means of intellectual survival under totalitarian regimes. The ideology and geopolitics of the Cold War marked another crisis in the European cultural space by excluding so-called “Iron Curtain” societies from “Europe”. Post-Cold War saw an “Eastern European” desire to “Return to Europe” through reclaiming a greater European common history and cultural heritage and a wish for dialogue with the west.

Chapter IV discusses the cultural field in socialist Yugoslavia and Romania to contextualize the intellectual work of Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić. A general discussion of the characteristics and specificity of intellectual activity and the cultural field in socialist societies is undertaken. The general contours of the kind of relationship intellectuals had with power and the kind of strategies they utilised to advance their interest or critique are examined. These specific aspects are of paramount importance as socialist systems produced distinctive cultural landscapes very different from what Katherine Verdery terms “the rationality of western political economies”

that enabled only certain articulations of subjectivity and strategies of resistance.[68]

Chapter V discusses the manner in which subjectivities are articulated in the post-socialist eastern European space by Drakulić and Liiceanu. The manner in which the legacy of the Totalitarian paradigm has shaped our understanding of subjectivities in the region is critiqued and a new manner of looking at old questions is proposed. The phenomenon of dissimulation or "dedublare" and the concept of "antipolitical privatism" are explained. I do this by discussing the use of multiple voices and representation in the two writers' texts. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to the role of symbolic geographies, articulations of home(land) and the idea of belonging in "Eastern Europe".

Chapter VI engages with the problem of remembering and writing on the recent past in Europe in Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić's life writing. I identify and discuss points of contention about so-called European memory including ideas of "hot" and "cold" memory in the construction of Western and Eastern memory. The special status of Holocaust memory in the West and the memory of the Gulag in the East are discussed in detail. Writing about and representing the recent past in eastern Europe is an act of power whereby the narrators place their region on a symbolic map of Europe. Silencing the truth and historic memory was a mechanism of oppression during communist regimes in eastern Europe. After the fall of communist regimes the issue of recuperating memory and advancing one's own version of the truth of the recent past was perceived as a way of reclaiming lost individuality.

Chapter VII examines the issue of resistance in the writing of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu advancing the case that ambivalent resistance is presented as "agential" acts. Antipolitics,

68 Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 96.

aesthetic autonomy, “living in truth” and “resistance through culture” are instances of articulations of ambivalent resistance in the texts of both writers. Their resistance is regarded as ambivalent because of their oftentimes difficult balance between collaboration with the regime, to ensure access to cultural resources, and fighting against the regime by participation in the parallel culture. “Dissidence” is central to understanding Drakulić and Liiceanu’s constructions of east European culture. I therefore explain dissidence in relation to strategies of survival and escapism, and the ethics of “the power of the powerless”.

The Conclusion discusses the manner in which the thesis has questioned the shortcomings of the Totalitarian paradigm which shaped a canonical understanding of all post-regime cultural phenomena in the region. The conclusion proposes new manners of studying (post)socialist subjectivities, memory and resistance. Subjectivities in socialist contexts are rethought beyond the canonical binary understanding of socialist regimes as oppressive on one side and oppressed people on the other side. I do this to highlight and discuss the array of ambivalent subjectivities that existed. The conclusion revisits notions of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ as constructed in Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić’s life writing. The manner in which Drakulić and Liiceanu’s engage with memory as acts of participation in a wider negotiation of European memory is discussed. Finally, the Conclusion ends with the manner in which resistance is conceptualized as agency and affirmation of individuality in Drakulić and Liiceanu’s writing.

Chapter II Theoretical framework

Establishing a Working Relationship between the Posts: Postcolonial critique and Postcommunist Studies

This chapter presents a possible working dialogue between postcolonial critique applied in the field of Postsocialist Studies. The chapter will first present some preliminary considerations. It then moves on to present past considerations on bringing the two fields of study together and the debates on this issue. The chapter discusses the manner in which scholars of postcolonial critique might have screening out Eastern Europe as a colonised space. In contrast to this reluctance the chapter then shows past engagements with the post-colonial paradigm in postcommunist studies. Limitations and advantages are discussed. The chapter argues that the "Eastern European" postsocialist space is to be considered as a "postcolonial" space having undergone processes of domination and hegemony of several types. The first type is Orientalism with its local discourses of inventing "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" while the second type of colonisation is the series of ideological practices and overall experience of socialism in eastern European societies. Having established this the chapter then presents the three focuses of the postcolonial investigation into postsocialist Eastern Europe. The first focus on ambiguous subjectivities is applied in Chapter V, followed by the second focus on memory in Chapter VI and, finally, the third focus on resistance and accommodation is applied in Chapter VII.

1 Introduction to terminology

The theoretical framework for this research is based on a critical reading of Edward Said's "Orientalist" thesis on the relationship between culture and power. The thesis looks at how epistemic domination and representation of the Other works in the specific construction of the discourse of "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism". The thesis draws on Said's

Orientalism to argue that "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" are discourses enabled by representation and appropriation of the Other. Of particular relevance to the thesis is Said's analysis of discursiveness, objectivity, innocent knowledge, and the political character of culture in society.[1] This chapter explains my reasons for bringing together concepts from the field of postcolonial and postcommunist studies. The chapters then explains the manner in which postcolonial critique is instrumentalized in post-Soviet and postcommunist societies, ending up in a rhetoric of victimhood. Finally, a possible solution to the dilemmas and difficulties of a common working framework is suggested.

Past scholarly considerations of potential mutual advantages of a dialogue between postcolonial and the postcommunist studies have a somewhat troubled history. There is, it seems, a lack of interest from postsocialist scholars utilize critical postcolonial concepts with which to investigate relevant areas of postsocialism studies.[2] I suggest there are reasons for the limited interrelationship between postcolonial and postcommunist studies. Researchers might have difficulty reaching consensus about what constitutes "empire" or the nature of the "post".[3] Another reason for such a position might be based on the thesis that supports a "Three-World" partitioning of the world view.[4] There have, however, been a few excellent, but debated Said-inspired analyses by theorists concerned with eastern Europe where Said's thesis of Orientalist representation has been put to good use.[5]

The apparent lack of interest in a working bridge between the two modes of inquiry has been decried by scholars such as David Moore, Katherine Verdery and Sharad Chari for a variety of

1 See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
2 See Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the "Post-Colonial",' *Social Text*, no. 31/32 (1992): 99–113.
3 For "empire" see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
4 Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, 'Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 1 (2009), 18.
5 Most notably Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*; Bakic-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia'; Jill Owczarzak, 'Introduction: Postcolonial studies and postsocialism in Eastern Europe', *Focaal*, 53 (2009): 3–19.

reasons.[6][7] Verdery and Chari view the eastern European societies as a space dominated by the legacy of the Soviet Union. However, as Verdery and Chari argue postcoloniality and postsocialism converge in their critical standpoint towards the past and in their efforts to envision potential societal renewal in the future. They argue that the aftermath of the Cold War has left behind an array of research agendas that both postcolonialism and postsocialism can actively engage with. For instance, the post-regime problems of regaining private property, ownership and land rights after processes of nationalization are key issues in both postcolonial and postsocialist theorists. Re-thinking social roles, social mobility together with gender issues could constitute a common point.[8]

Verdery and Chari argue moreover, that postcolonial critique can be used to challenge the neoliberal dogmatism that has informed many studies of eastern European societies after the fall of the Iron Curtain. For them, it has the potential to foreground critical questions about how the nation, independent markets, ethnic communities and identities reconfigure in the post context.[9] Verdery and Chari envisage promising possibilities for both fields as new archival evidence and fieldwork create new forms of ethnographic engagement.[10] They argue that the two fields have much in common. Firstly, both field interrogate state-sanctioned racism and state-produced subject positions. Both fields question the relationship between empire and the nation, and forms of social control and oppression. Finally, both question problematic legacies and external intervention. [11] This understanding is important as it enables a departure from what Verdery and Chari call "the World Bank orthodoxy" approach[12] of the 1990s which focused on the foreign imposition of a model of neoliberal economic development at the expense of respecting the right to self-determination.

6 David C. Moore,'Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique', *PMLA*, 116, 1 (2001): 111–28.
7 See Chari and Verdery, 'Thinking between the Posts'.
8 Chari and Verdery, 'Thinking between the Posts', 11.
9 Chari and Verdery, 11.
10 Chari and Verdery, 18–20.
11 See Michel Foucault, 'Naissance de la biopolitique', *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 79, année 1978-1979: 367–72. Chari and Verdery, 'Thinking between the Posts', 18–20.
12 Chari and Verdery, 9.

The possibilities of bringing postcolonialism and postsocialism together facilitates going beyond a simplistic binary of "oppressor"/"oppressed" for understanding subjectivities and subject-positions in socialist contexts. Previously absent ambivalent subjectivities can be foregrounded and discussed in their own right. The same argument can be made for politics of memory and resistance. The years following the fall of socialism and the ensuing research were characterised by what Chari and Verdey term "the fallacies of mainstream transitology" and "Word-Bank orthodoxy".[13] This also had a significant influence on the manner in which "East European" memory was constructed, negotiated and studied as neoliberal ideologies set a restricted agenda as to how the communist past was remembered. The various fields of study, Area Studies including "Slavonic/Russian Studies", Communism Studies and Transition Studies or paradigms such as the Totalitarian Paradigm or economic approaches to postsocialist societies have shaped distinctive types of research outputs and knowledge. As argued in the Introduction and discussed in Chapters V and VI, the Totalitarian Paradigm together with the above-mentioned fields of study enabled research within the frames of each discipline and paradigm. I suggest that individual experiences are missing from previous studies of socialist and postsocialist subjectivities in these fields. As discussed in Chapter V, the experience of split selves, the double, the mask and ketman are all expressions of ambivalent subjectivities in socialism.[14] Previously, these experiences are either studied separate from socialist subjectivity and are only referred to in individual cases or they are excluded from the socialist experience.[15] I argue that they are part and parcel of the socialist experience and belong to that legacy with consequences stretching to postsocialist landscapes. I base this argument on the phenomena of "antipolitical privatism" and "dedublare" or dissimilation that scholars Kenneth Jowitt and Gail Kligman suggest. Chapter VI discusses how revisiting life writing and memory become important as seen in the narratives of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu who offer a

13 Chari and Verdery, 'Thinking between the Posts', 9.

14 For the term "ketman" see Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1990). I discuss "ketman" more in detail in Chapter V.

15 For a critical reading and example of a binary understanding of socialist subjectivities see Alex D.E. Boican, *Rearticulating Socialist Subjectivities Class and Gender in Romanian Fiction during Communism*, Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2016.

more complicated relationship with the past and questions of individual and collective responsibility. Chapter VII revisits the issue of resistance in socialism by departing from previous moralist considerations on intellectual dissidence and positing instead that individual survival under communist regimes were a mix of accommodation with power and expressions of resistance. The chapter makes the argument that there was a gradual shift and development from accommodation to an integration of ethics rather than an absence of resistance. For this reason a postcolonial critique and its vocabulary can enable a re-thinking of memory, remembrance and resistance beyond the climate of the 1990s that endorsed only certain approaches and studies.

The need for justice, retribution of private property, access to personal surveillance files, re-organisation of the economy, the judiciary and the executive were urgent following the fall of socialist regimes and naturally took precedence over other considerations, including culture. However, the models which were chosen as solutions to these pressing issues were not necessarily compatible with the task ahead. For instance, the neoliberal model of "shock-therapy" chosen for reorganising postsocialist economics supported a view of past communist economies as fundamentally flawed. In the field of justice the search for scapegoats and profiteers in the former regime produced a binary understanding of the recent past that did not leave much room for complexity of experience beyond victims, perpetrators and their accomplices.[16]

What do we mean by colonial? How do we understand the post? Not only do theorists need to answer these questions, they need to decide what "empire" means for scholars of postsocialist studies. We must question whether the choice to engage with postcolonial critique, in studying postsocialist landscapes adds value, enriches or questions previous established knowledge in the field. In other words, caution is needed so as not to perform what Giovanni Satori calls a

16 See William Miller, Stephen White, Paul Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

"conceptual overstretch". In this case, the caution is needed so as not to utilise concepts such as "empire", "domination", "hegemony", "resistance", "subjectivity" or "agency" loosely. If we take all forms of ideological domination and oppressive state policies as "empire" then our overly-generous space of analysis risks erasing many local experiences and historical nuances.[17] If we adopt a so-called geographical standard of exclusion as to what constitutes "colonial" and "postcolonial" then we risk eliding parallels between inter-related phenomena. I believe that a balance must be struck between these two extreme positions while always bearing in mind the actual effectiveness and utility of our choice.

2 Postcolonial critique screening out Eastern Europe

The non-engagement with effects of communism in eastern European societies and former Soviet satellite states is striking given the distinctively special and particular opportunities that such a newly opened field of studies offers for postcolonial critique. It could well be Eastern European societies are rarely recognised as a colonised space because of institutional, political, cultural and religious affiliations with Western Europe.[18] This supposition operates on the assumption that Eastern European nations emerged from World War I as independent political units that shared the democratic values, institutions and lifestyles of their Western continental counterparts. This assumption extends the category of "West" and "European" eastwards and, by doing so, conceals the oppression, political takeovers and historical experiences which ensued after the Second World War in Eastern European territories. Cristina Şandru argues that while postcolonial critics deplore an Orientalizing Western totalizing gaze they nevertheless carry out a similar act of epistemic violence "by 'erasing' from the intellectual and cultural map of Europe those small nations which

17 I utilise the notion of "empire" as theorised by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire.* See Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État (Notes pour une recherche),' *La Pensée*, 151 (juin 1970).
18 Cristina Şandru, *Worlds Apart?: a Postcolonial Reading of (Post)communist East-Central European Culture*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 19.

have never been part of the imperial project."[19] Here Şandru, in a similar manner to Verdery and Chari, critiques the so-called "Three World" division of intellectual labour into first, second and third worlds. According to this division, former socialist countries belong to the so-called "Second World", eliminating them from critique by postcolonial scholars.[20] This oversight, in my view, is based on the assumption that socialist regimes were either part of the so-called "First World" capitalist system prior to becoming socialist or will transition into capitalist economies in the postsocialist period, effectively re-inserting themselves into the "First World". In both these scenarios the distinctive realities produced by the socialist regimes are either undervalued/ minimised or Marxist-Leninism as an alternative modernity is dismissed as a legitimate modernist project. The result of this is that the experience of Soviet expansion in the region after the Second World War and into the 1950s remains uncovered and unacknowledged in postcolonial criticism. The socialist domination sought to create and uniformize a single universe of experience throughout the Soviet realm through various means. One was the pressure produced by the presence of military Soviet occupation on the sovereign ground of east European countries. Another type of domination occurred through the political and economic control exerted by Moscow onto puppet governments. Finally, domination also struck the very identity of the community and its local culture via the enforcement of foreign educational policies into the national curricula.

This does not mean that the scenario depicted here was experienced in the same way throughout the entire period of the reign of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The difference and diversity of experiences are tremendous from one case or period to another. It is clear though that immediately following the end of the Second World War and towards the end of the 1950s, the Soviet Union was

19 Şandru, *Worlds Apart?*, 19.

20 Piret Pekier, 'Post–communist literatures: A postcolonial perspective,' *Eurozine*, 28 March 2006. Available at https://www.eurozine.com/post-communist-literatures-a-postcolonial-perspective. For an ample discussion on the "Three-World" division see Carl E., Pletsch, 'The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, circa 1950–1975', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 23, 4 (1981): 565–90.

a very real political and military presence and shaped the development of socialism in eastern European societies.[21]

3 The rejection of postcolonial critique in Eastern Europe

The lack of scholarly interest and engagement between postcolonial and postsocialist studies comes from both fields of study, albeit for different reasons. The reluctance and sometimes rejection of post-colonialism as a valid paradigm of critique in postcommunism studies occurs for various reasons. The alignment of Eastern Europe as a category of knowledge and postcommunism studies with the so-called "Third World" as defined by the postcolonial paradigm is for some advocates of postcommunism studies regarded as incompatible due to "civilizational" criteria. Some scholars of Eastern Europe or postcommunism studies view this incompatibility between postcolonial and postcommunist studies as having a quintessentially Eurocentric bias. A Eurocentric discourse of superiority is supported and enabled by the local phenomenon of "nesting Orientalism"[22] through which each Eastern European society "orientalizes" neighbouring nations by attributing them to a category of "Eastness" or "Asian-ness" in a perpetual search to construct their own "European-ness". Consequently, the Soviet Union's reach over Eastern Europe is represented as the invasion of a foreign barbaric Asian power that has nothing to do with the so-called "European" and democratic character of the invaded societies. This Eurocentric view parallels Eastern European intellectuals' disdain of being placed in the same conceptual category as non-European cultures and societies on racist premises. This widespread attitude among Eastern Europe's elites contributes to explaining why the postcolonial paradigm is generally rejected in the region. Moreover, this widely-shared viewpoint in Eastern Europe, is indicative of the fact that historical experiences of trauma and conflict in the region have not even resulted in a re-visitation and eventually a repudiation of

21 See Dag Wincens Noren, 'The Soviet Union and eastern Europe: considerations in a political transformation of the Soviet bloc', (M.A. Thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1990) retrieved at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/2455
22 See Bakic-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia'.

oppression and domination. On the contrary, the research of scholars such as Serguei Oushakine indicate that uncovering sites of resistance or "memory work" on the recent past is being instrumentalized and phenomena such as "nesting Orientalism" and "ideologies of eastness" are reinforced.[23] As scholar Monica Popescu states elsewhere "a history of suffering is not incompatible with the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and discrimination against other subordinate peoples".[24]

A thesis for the existence of an east and central European (post)colonialism is posited by scholars such as Larry Wolff, Maria Todorova, Milica Bakic-Hayden, Merje Kuus and Vesna Goldsworthy from various standpoints on different grounds.[25] The first version of an east and central European (post)colonialism is concerned with a form of colonization by the Western powers of the continent, such as England, France and Germany that took shape under the guise of cultural and political projects framed by discourses of modernization and progress. Scholars who posited the invention of "Eastern Europe"[26], "Balkanism"[27] and "nesting Orientalism"[28] have critiqued what they regard as a version of colonization concerned with the construction and propagation of so-called east European Orientalism. The second version of a theory drawing on an east and central European (post)colonization focuses on the various annexation projects exercised by the regional powers, notably the Ottoman empire, the Austro-Hungarian empire and, primarily the Soviet Union in its various historical incarnations. Works adhering to this second version of eastern European colonization focus mostly on the Soviet Union's colonization of various central and east European

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23 See Serguei A. Oushakine, 'Postcolonial Estrangements: Claiming a Space Between Stalin and Hitler', in *Rites of Place: Public Commemoration in Russia and Eastern Europe,* ed. Julie Buckler and Emily D. Johnson (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 285–315. For an ample discussion on "ideologies of eastness" see Tomasz Zarycki, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*, (London/New York: Routledge 2016).

24 Monica Popescu, 'Lewis Nkosi in Warsaw: Translating Eastern European experiences for an African audience', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, 2 (2012), 184.

25 See Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion'.

26 See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*

27 See Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.

28 Bakic-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia'.

societies. The authors of these works study issues including individual and collective "mind colonization",[29] social and market control, centralization of cultural life and communications.

The two versions of an east and central European (post)colonialism have a mix of solid and weak arguments. For instance, questioning whether east European societies have undergone a process of colonization is legitimate; historical evidence invites constraint and scepticism. As stated earlier, central and east European territories have been the 'playground' for the application of various political projects and imperial ambitions of several Western European countries through the course of time and have been present in the imagination of western European powers. Thus, a critique of the "invention of Eastern Europe" needs to avoid the reiteration of the discourse of the "West" as a single atemporal unit. This requires presenting and critiquing, in their historical specificity and context, the main incarnations/specific expressions of "European-ness".Past postcolonial analysis of east Europe reveals an array of Orientalizing practices, including inventing "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" in derogatory terms and, an internalization of Otherness or self-colonisation.[30]

Orientalization is a process that was applied throughout the European continent. Western and South-Eastern European societies have produced their own version of Orientalization and applied it to each other, in various historical contexts, as power relationships shifted with changing state reconfigurations following the collapse of continental empires. Historian Maria Todorova warns us of the dangers of not considering the agency of local actors that in some cases resisted "Orientalization", and have participated in its production. The binary empire-colony can work as an ineffective and binding straitjacket in eastern Europe limiting the scope of any analysis of hegemony, domination, oppression, agency and subjectivity. Furthermore producing a discourse on "Eastern Europe" is first and foremost, an elite project that may not necessarily have the desired

29 For "second order colonization of the mind" or "filtered colonialism" see Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Central European Culture* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue UP, 2002), 4.
30 See Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion'.

impact on the daily lives of people and may only exist as a cultural product consumed and shared in elite circles.

The salience that discourses such as “European-ness” or “Eastern Europe” have for the elite may not necessarily carry the same meaning in the experience of all groups in society. Whether or not the discourse of “Eastern Europe is ostensibly restricted to intellectuals, it is legitimate to question the salience and actual effects of the discourse on the modern European imagination.[31] It is important to investigate whether notions of European superiority have been translated into specific State policies with tangible outcomes in central and east European societies. According to Milutinovici, we know that east European intellectuals were indeed an audience for discourses on “Eastern Europe”.[32] However, it is necessary to question the extent to which these views were shared. They certainly filtered into the language of political culture and the concerns of east Europeans through the numerous interwar period and incorporated into Europeanists’, Modernists’, and Nativists’ or Traditionalists’ positions on “European-ness” or “Eastern Europe”.

The second type of colonization in the territories of eastern Europe concerns the Soviet Union’s imposition of socialist regimes. The scope and the society-wide effects of the changes this entailed is a focus for scholars who wish to do a postcolonial analysis of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Such an analysis faces several challenges. Firstly because there was no single implementation of communist doctrine, there is no single model of a communist state as an example to discuss the type of domination that was exerted in the territories of eastern Europe. Rather, east European countries enacted Marxist-Leninism differently which, complicates discussion of domination and oppression. A general description of the so-called “Soviet empire” in eastern Europe, is necessarily a weak generalization. In the first years of socialist transformations that consisted in the nationalization of

31 I comment on the syntagm “modern European imagination” and its historicity in Chapter III and discuss its role and implications.
32 See Milutinović, *Getting over Europe.*

private property, the cancellation of a private market, the creation of new political-administrative elites, the centralization and the dismantling of old institutional structures we might be correct to say that these processes were carried out following a Leninist-Stalinist model. After an initial phase, though, east European socialism sought to gain more autonomy from the Soviet Union and followed different paths. Demands for socio-cultural reform particular to Hungary and Czechoslovakia were met with backlashes from Moscow, with the consolidation phases that ensued once again changing the types of regimes. For this reason socialism in eastern European societies must be discussed on a case by case basis. For example, the Yugoslav workers' management model of socialism with its relatively liberal policies produced constraints and opportunities different to those in socialist Romania in the 1970s and 1980s. After the initial implementation of a Leninist-Stalinist model of communism, socialist regimes in eastern Europe took very different paths in their attempts to secure power and gain autonomy. Many "old guard" and Moscow-backed political elites were purged by local political groups wishing to take charge. Regimes differed, not only on "paper", but also in the experiences of their citizens. Workers' self-management, the non-alignment movement, "Goulash communism" and the nationalist-dynastic model created heterogeneous socialist realities in eastern Europe. The "empire" was not all-encompassing and all-controlling. It is precisely this local element that disrupts the narrative of a unidirectional domination coming from the Soviet Union.

4 Engagements with the post-colonial paradigm in postcommunist studies

Stephen Tötösy de Zepetnek is one of the few scholars who has consistently engaged in bringing post-colonial and postcommunist studies together. In *Comparative Central European Culture, de* Zepetnek advances a model for analysing Central European politics and culture through the language of colonization and an understanding of central Europe as a "periphery within Europe". De Zepetnek's model of analysis depicts Central Europe as a space marginalized by two centres of

power, the West and the East. During various historical epochs these two centres influenced the central region. The west exerted its power through cultural means, whereas Eastern domination, here the Soviet Union, was political and economic.

While de Zepetnek's engagement with post-colonial and post communism studies is a step towards bringing the two fields into a working dialogue there are limitations. De Zepetnek successfully opened a discussion previously uncharted in Europe by introducing the condition of the ambivalent and split Self. However, by failing to extend its scope and by focusing exclusively on Central Europe, de Zepetnek failed to take account of the entangled history and similarities Central European societies shared with Eastern and South-Eastern European societies. As a consequence, regional, societal and cultural issues that should be discussed within a common framework were omitted. For instance, discussions about cultural identification and belonging in regions claimed by the Ottoman Empire before their independence or discussion about the very idea of "Central Europe" did not occur. Not taking account of these thorny regional issues resulted in them being unresolved, and marginalized as objects of future study.

Although initially a number of postcommunism studies' scholars were reluctant to engage with the postcolonial paradigm, scholars from the region gradually developed connections between the fields. Indeed, Eastern European researchers in the field of postcommunism studies are challenging Eurocentric and neo-liberal orthodoxies established in the aftermath of the fall of communist regimes. They are asking questions and conducting fieldwork on the recent past in the region in ways very different from previous researchers. Their work has addressed difficult regional issues, such as dissidence in communist regimes. Postcolonial studies in fact provide a new research framework from which old objects of study can be re-examined in a manner free from neoliberal agendas, totalitarian-inspired or moralist stances that previous considerations have suffered from.

Although the research interests of this new wave of Eastern European researchers may vary considerably they were guided by a common desire to find new avenues of inquiry to enable a better understanding of the past, to expose the construction of many national "sacred cows", and to rethink and challenge previously uncontested "pillars". The latter included rethinking subjectivities, agency and resistance in a manner that is liberated from moralist ends such as establishing victims and perpetrators leaving room for nothing in between or beyond this binary.

In his work on the idea of "Inventing eastern Europe" Larry Wolff gives an account of the Enlightenment worldview and representations of east European territories, people and societies.[33] He examined the construction of the homogeneous term "Eastern Europe", revealing the techniques and discursive practices of the European imagination. Todorova's work, "Imagining the Balkans", is another Said-inspired work.[34] In it Todorova provides an analysis of both the creation of Balkan Otherness, and the images that south-east European territories have produced of western societies. Todorova's work takes a step beyond the simple colonizer-colonized binary to explain how east Europeans engage with images of western Europe and how they changed, transformed and rejected representations of themselves. From a rather different perspective than that of Todorova, Nataša Kovačević claims that an uninterrupted discursive tradition of "east European Orientalism"[35] does exist although it can certainly be challenged because of its analytic limitations. She identifies recurring tropes and themes, including the need for native east Europeans to emancipate themselves and their homelands from the status of "Europe's Other". Kovačević rejects the need to constantly prove one's "European-ness". The need to shed the "problematic legacies" of communist regimes as "unregenerate Oriental instincts"[36] are easily identifiable throughout the central, east and south-east region of Europe in the writings of Vladimir Nabokov or Czeslaw Milosz among others.[37] All these

33 See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*
34 See Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans.*
35 See Kovačević, *Narrating Post/Communism.*
36 Kovačević, *Civilization's Wild East,* 1.
37 Kovačević, 1.

works contribute to our understanding of how intellectual elites have constructed Europe's Other. These writers question "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism", as expressions of east Europeans self-identification, ambivalent subjectivities, and sites of resistance and local agency.

Given this very difficult history of interaction between the postcolonial and postcommunist fields I ask two questions: to what extent then is a postcolonial inquiry of any relevance in studying east European phenomena and does the postcolonial paradigm offer us something that other fields of study do not?

It is clear that postcolonial and postcommunist studies should be in dialogue because their areas of concern are convergent and inter-related. Both fields of study aim to understand a previous state of ideological and political domination and a post state, an ever-changing present that posits competing visions of the past for society renewal. The identity of the oppressed, so often articulated in the language of the nation, is a major concern in both fields. The nature, practices and enduring legacies of the previous regime are other crucially important points of convergence. Furthermore, both fields have to address the analytic traps that are inherent in studying issues of trauma and memory, and nostalgia as a retrospective glance into the recent past. While it is true that there have been various historical and geographical reasons for the divide between the two fields of study, which has led them to different development paths, I believe that their critical spirit in questioning the basic analytic concepts of their field are useful in re-thinking subjectivities, memory, agency and resistance in the postsocialist eastern European space.

While originally post-colonial studies were engaged with writing back to the colonisers and publicly reasserting the political and social identities of the colonised by addressing questions and dilemmas related to the concept of *empire, domination, power, identity* and *national belonging*, its

palette of investigation has diversified because of its critical nature and continuous changes in global power and market relations. Other Humanities disciplines have found its critical spirit, questions and tools useful for understanding new phenomena and re-visiting old themes from a fresh perspective. Scholars who work from or within a postcolonial paradigm now go beyond its initial tenets and revisit the institutions that were initially treated as self-evident, such as "empire", "domination" or simply the "colonial".

Debates in both fields have addressed and scrutinized the dangers of dogmatism such as maintaining the "Three-World" division, a legacy of the Cold War.[38] It remains unclear what are assumptions upon which the thesis of ex socialist east European states. as "Second-World" is based upon. Within postcolonial studies central and eastern Europe is represented as a space relevant only with reference to the collapse of communist ideology. This limited viewpoint fails to capture the complex nature of the communist and postcommunist experience and indicates a more general difficulty of placing "Second-World" within a critical framework. For instance in the context of the "Third-World" division, the so-called "Second-World" has no history prior to communist imposition. When this history is acknowledged it is assumed to have been in line with Western European industrial and capitalist development. This perspective minimises east European dependency on industrialized Western European economies and the difficult geopolitical turmoil of east European states. In other words, it downplays or fails to recognize the factors that shaped these societies.

A postcolonial critique can offer an outlook, methodology and vocabulary in areas useful to the study of phenomena pertaining to the eastern European space where other paradigms have failed.

38 For an ample discussion on the "Three-World" division see Pletsch, 'The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, circa 1950–1975,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 4 (1981): 565–90. For a critical discussion on the "Third-World" division and its impediments in bringing postcolonial and postsocialist studies together see Pekier, 'Post–communist literatures: A postcolonial perspective'.

Historical phenomena in eastern European societies have been studied in a number of fields of Area Studies: Soviet/Russian/Slavonic, Central-East European and South-Eastern European, Communism and Postcommunism Studies, Transition Studies and Totalitarianism Studies. This long enumeration is not without a point since all these fields of study have a specific outlook on their object of study and, consequently, their research output carries the language of their ideology. Thus, projects within the field of Slavonic Studies have favoured and tended to represent east European phenomena as a mere extension of Russian interests in the region. The specificity, variation, complexities and agency of numerous societies in eastern Europe tend to be reduced to a homogeneous annex of Russia. The inheritance and legacy of various cultural and political projects in the region – Latin, Byzantine, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian – are overshadowed by a single culture: Russian. Other efforts that limited knowledge on the complexities of eastern Europe can be observed in the efforts of advocates of the idea of a Central Europe. A famous example is Milan Kundera's Othering of Russian culture in *The Tragedy of Central Europe*[39]. South-Eastern European Studies, however, favour a revitalization and retrieval of the "Balkan" label in Europe. Transition Studies produced research on postsocialist eastern European societies influenced by a neoliberal agenda. The name of this field of studies itself denotes its underlying assumptions that development is unidirectional. In other words, development needs to transition from a failed and de-legitimized communist economic and political model of development to the only recognised model, that is, capitalist democracy. Postcommunism Studies have been malleable in their engagement and focus. Although the Totalitarian paradigm has been the most enriching, because of its canonical status it has also been most resistant to further research and understanding of the history of the region.

I am not advocating that scholars should apply postcolonial investigations to other fields merely by forcibly extending these concepts for the sake of an academic agenda. Such an effort could lead to overloading what we mean by "postcolonial" and extending it to such a degree that it risk losing the

39 For a critical reading of Milan Kundera's essay see Judt, 'The Rediscovery of Central Europe'.

very analytic strength that we appreciate and need in the first place. The "postcolonial" is not a single comprehensive conceptual frame that explains phenomena by shutting all other interpretative perspectives out. One has to turn to postcolonial studies' original critical spirit, its constant need to (re)think the analytic certainties and apply this to see how postcommunism studies and the postcolonial paradigm can communicate and not simply borrow uncritically. Clearly postcolonial and postcommunism studies have something to say to each other and a dialogue would be advantageous to scholars in both fields. The position is not radically new by any means, rather I argue that it is necessary to continue the conversation between post-colonial and postcommunist studies.

The simplistic binary "oppressor"/ "oppressed" is not productive. Edward Said's point that it is necessary to consider the discourse and its conditions of possibility, including resistance and accommodation is pivotal. The complex landscape of colonization, domination and cultural hegemony has many elements that need incorporation into the analysis: neither are the "colonizer", nor the "colonized" simple homogeneous atemporal agents.[40] I believe that Said's writings on the process of "Orientalism" and the under-explored relationship between "empire" and "culture" provide us with rich insights into the residual effects of cultural domination. Western claims to cultural superiority that legitimated and enabled European cultural hegemony is deconstructed.[41] Its various parts that reinforce each other are analyzed: the logic and necessity of a supporting Other, the recognition of a discourse, the recognition of a relationship and the implicit renunciation of the myth of pure objective knowledge, recognizing agency, recognizing the role and function of an authority and institutions in the process of legitimization of the discourse and the discursive practices of exteriority and representation.

40 Şandru, *Worlds Apart?*, 14–7.
41 See John A. Agnew, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, 'Geopolitics and discourse. Practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy,' *Political Geography Quarterly*, 11 (March 1992): 190–204.

The overuse of terms such as “European-ness”, “Eastern Europe” or “Balkanism” displaces the focus from what should be central questions: who produces the discourse, who is the agent and what are the effects of the use of these terms? What distinguishes Said’s writings between “*Orientalism”* and “*Culture and Imperialism”* is the re-location of the discourse in the field of culture, the environment that surrounds the discourse and the set of relationships that enable the discourse to exist. “Eastern Europe” or “Balkanism”, just like:

> The ‘Orient’ is an integral [part] of European material civilization and culture [and it] expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines[42].

Said’s contention that the Orient was discursively constructed is helpful in understanding how discursive constructions of “Eastern Europe” is a manner of dominating and having epistemological authority over territories and people in a designated area. This insight aids our understanding of the systematic manner in which a designated territory was managed, contained and produced in the imagination and in the material dimension of culture from a political, ideological and scientific perspective. As Said argues, Orientalism:

> not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do).[43]

Said’s theorising of Orientalism exposes a relationship between power and domination in which claims to European superiority are reiterated in regard to an inferior Other. The discourse is

42 Said, *Orientalism*, 2.
43 Said, *Orientalism,* 12.

constituted and enabled by an intellectual authority over the subject, protected by institutions that safeguard the tenets of the discourse. We are reminded that within the analysis of discourses such as these we need to direct our focus not on what is being said, but on the various techniques of representation, institutions, traditions and conventions that enable the discourse itself.

According to Said representations of space in the modern European imagination have produced a distinctive field of expertise and construction of the objects of discourse. Said describes this construction-process through the image of theatrical representation as a recurring repertoire: “The Orientalist stage, as I have been calling it, becomes a system of moral and epistemological rigor. As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western “consumer” of Orientalism.”[44] The discourse, a set of representations reproduced by an external auth“ority has a self-enforcing and self-containing character continuously (re)created in a closed loop system: “objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter.”[45] The modern European imagination, knowledge-production and institutions legitimated a way of looking at the world that produced an understanding of a universal hierarchy and a vocabulary to represent and confine it. On this Said writes:

> The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.[46]

Said’s critique in *Culture and Imperialism* is a useful guide for understanding how to approach the text, whether this be a map, a book or a discourse. The idea of a detached observer who approaches

44 Said, *Orientalism,* 67.
45 Said, *Orientalism*, 70.
46 Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

a text with "pure" knowledge needs to be challenged. Said believes that the false separation between the realm of power and culture needs to be acknowledged:

> Culture is exonerated of any entanglements with power, representations are considered only as apolitical images to be parsed and construed as so many grammars of exchange, and the divorce of the present from the past is assumed to be complete. And yet, far from this separation of spheres being a neutral or accidental choice, its real meaning is as an act of complicity, the humanist's choice of a disguised, denuded, systematically purged textual model over a more embattled model, whose principal features would inevitably coalesce around the continuing struggle over the question of empire itself … This is by no means a simple matter, since – 1 believe – it has been the essence of experience in the West at least since the late eighteenth century not only to acquire distant domination and reinforce hegemony, but also to divide the realms of culture and experience into apparently separate spheres.[47]

There are several points here that make Said's insight relevant to the study of socialist and postsocialist experiences. Firstly, is the question of the assumptions scholars have regarding the relationship between power and culture. In a relationship conceptualized as merely between a unitary monolithic political power (i.e. socialist authorities) on the one side and powerless intellectuals on the other there is little room for a nuanced understanding of individual strategies.[48] Secondly, approaching this relationship and the cultural field in this manner deprives intellectuals of agency. By doing so, our understanding of this complex relationship is reduced. Moreover, scholars can lose sight of the dynamic nature of this negotiation process, of the shifting strategies intellectuals as agents resorted to and the actual development from mere survival to an integration of ethics and, ultimately, subversion of the ideology of power itself. The assumptions of the neutrality of culture that Said deplores here are of paramount importance in my discussion because they touch a main point: the fact that intellectuals shifted from the experience of living in communism to both resistance and subversion. The entire dissident oeuvre makes this point. Thirdly, the fact that culture and power were linked supports the "accommodation" thesis. Not only were intellectuals agents in a

47 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 57.

48 The relationship between political authorities and intellectuals during communism is taken up in Chapter IV. For an extended account of the idea of resistance strategies and accommodation see Chapter VII.

field in which they negotiated their freedom continuously, but the trade-off for the benefits intellectuals received ended up enabling and supporting the oppressive socialist regimes.[49]

Not to acknowledge that culture and power are anything but intimately entangled would mean to deny the hybrid nature of cultural experience and production. What this recognition entails for analysis is the need to interrogate both the simultaneous character of the intertwined histories of both ideology and resistance:

> We now know that these non-European peoples did not accept with indifference the authority projected over them, or the general silence on which their presence in variously attenuated forms is predicated. We must therefore read the great canonical texts... with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented.[50]

There are similarities in terms of political and social engineering that both capitalist empires and socialist communist regimes have deployed and in the response and experience these engendered in terms of practices of resistance and accommodation. Furthermore, the interplay between state projects and individuals' responses embodied in cultural practices have produced new modes of subjectivity, a distinctive subject position or position of articulation that needs to be studied in its own right. My focus here are the ideological themes present in various (post)communist and (post)colonial contexts, and, individual responses that those ideologies engendered and are made manifest in various cultural practices that simultaneously combine resistance and accommodation. The following themes are therefore pertinent: common ideological structures based on binaries, identity constructions, politics of memory, remembrance and the experience of trauma, the new forms of colonization that the totalitarian character produced in Eastern Europe and, finally, the distinctive cultural fields that both resistance and accommodation have created.

49 I dedicate a discussion on intellectuals' accommodation with socialist regimes in Chapter VII.
50 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66.

Historically, the territories of eastern Europe have been under the political and cultural influence of two principal spheres of power. The discourse of "European-ness" together with the invention of "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" could be counted as cultural hegemons judging by the role they play in the region. These discourses together with various political projects of domination throughout history have produced a distinctive reality in the region. For instance, political projects such the Pan-German notion of Mitteleuropa or the Austro-Hungarian empire have significantly altered, shaped and constructed the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European landscape.[51] A range of diverse linguistic and sub-regional groups with different regional traditions became the subjects of a German-speaking Christian Catholic continental empire which sought, as most empires do, to homogenise.[52] The Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium altered the socio-political landscape of the heterogeneous east European communities with its numerous edicts and reforms.[53] The Ottoman Empire left an enduring legacy in many social spheres in the Balkan peninsula and its former South-East European provinces or paşalık.[54] In Europe's most eastward territories it was the Russian Empire that sought influence and control especially by enforcing common Slavic language and Christian-Orthodox religion.[55] These post-imperial legacies produced a conflict. In the nineteenth century as nationalist struggles took political form it was the identity markers inherited from these imperial legacies that created differences. In the foundational myth of ethnic nations identity markers such as language or religion were deployed in the construction of national identity.[56] These are all elements that need to be considered when interpreting narratives of belonging to the east European map.

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51 See ed. David Atkinson and Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitical Traditions: Critical Histories of a Century of Geopolitical Thought* (London: Routledge 2000).

52 See Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo, *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).

53 See Jonathan Harris, *The Lost World of Byzantium* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).

54 See Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

55 See ed. Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber and Alexander Semyonov, *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Leiden: Brill 2009).

56 See Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition.*

The thesis's engagement with eastern Europe from a postcolonial viewpoint engages with the issues of subjectivities (Chapter V), memory (Chapter VI) and resistance as agency (Chapter VII). The first focus of this investigation regards subjectivities in (post)communism. There are several aspects in which postcolonial and postcommunist identity constructions converge. Firstly, in the eastern European territories, cultural and symbolic geography influences the ways in which identification takes place. Here, borderlands and frontiers fed into the process of creating categories of sameness and difference in constant processes of negotiation. For instance, the desire to belong to categories such as "European", "Occidental", "Western" or "Civilized" have produced the phenomenon of "Nesting Orientalism" whereby categories of Otherness are continuously created and shifted further East in a perpetual quest to establish the "Eastern neighbour" as the "Asian" Other. In such a process, borders are never stable; they shift depending on contingent necessities. As a category of knowledge, discourse, object of study and self-identification eastern European life writing suggests uneasy, difficult and ambiguous subjectivities. Many of the common metaphors include the image of a bridge between Europe and Asia, between an imaginary realm of "Civilization" and "Barbarity" or of an area of in-between-ness between a desired "West" and a rejected "East". "Eastern Europe" has been utilized in a number of discursive incarnations, including discourses of Orientalism, Balkanism and what Tomasz Zarycki calls ideologies of "East-ness".[57] All these elements have played a role in the ways in which cultures and societies in the region have envisioned themselves and their constructed others. I believe that these particularities of the historical experience in the east European territories create complex subjectivities that go beyond rigid binaries or simplistic equations of empire/hegemon and oppressed individual. A reading of (post)socialist articulations of subjectivities as ambivalent can therefore offer a rich understanding of these experiences. Within this first investigative focus there is the conflictual matter of belonging in a symbolic map of Europe. A detailed reading of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu, how

57 See Zarycki, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*.

they place themselves and their societies on the map of Europe and how the two construct visions of (home)lands is offered.

The second focus of my reading is the experience of trauma in the communist regime involving problematics of collective memory, selective remembrance, recalling, writing and representing the recent past, amnesia and the re-writing of history. This set of issues all revolve around the legacy that the regime has left behind and bring into focus questions of how the past is remembered.

Postcommunist landscapes are a curious mix of acknowledgement and denial of what is often an ambivalent past. On the one hand, there is recognition of the relevance of collective and individual memories to better understand the recent past. Many postcommunist societies engaged in projects aimed at memorialization or establishing historical facts and truths about past events. On other hand, this endeavour is a painful and morally-challenging process because remembering experiences from a totalitarian past is a painful process. Such recollections demand, in theory, detachment where in practice there can only be subjectivity, positioning and pain. These projects of remembrance constitute, in fact, either processes of healing, making sense of the past, making amends with past injustice by seeking some form of justice in the present and criminalizing the past regime and the agents that made it possible.

Many problems ensue from such objectives since creating an image of oppressors and victims often turns into a witch hunt. Such processes hold the key to unfolding how memory is deployed or instrumentalized in forming present collective identities, the cognitive frames they draw from and the techniques they use. For instance, the period before the empire/totalitarian regime is often idealized through a selective processing of memories and histories as retrospection and nostalgia interfere with the verity of what is being created. Some episodes are obliterated, others are

downplayed and others are overemphasized in a continuous effort to distance oneself from the recent past and create new possibilities for the future. Truth commissions, legislation, educational institutions and public monuments are re-thought in such a way that the national community can envision itself once again, either in racial, ethnic, religious or cultural terms. This "post" period is a frame in itself because the demands it makes and the climate it creates make only certain representations about the past possible. For instance, the demand for villains and victims creates a simplistic reality and restrictive truth about the past. By creating villains and victims, the complex reality of simultaneous compliance and rejection of the ideology of the regime gets lost. Often questions of morality and responsibility are too difficult to engage with so they are concealed within simplistic narratives that have an easy solution. Within this logic and its practices the memory of communism is rendered external and foreign thanks to the distinctive climate of postcommunism. The actual experience of the regime is distanced by rendering it external to the Self, both individual and collective.

The process of museumization[58] is used as a solution to the conflict between the desire to make amends with the past while remaining distant from it. The process of distancing from the past requires eliminating any trace of agency on the part of individuals in acts of violence. Framing historical events as truths and presenting them to the public in simple, unambiguous and uncomplicated ways, as museumization practices do, insert these truths into the public sphere and into another process of social reproduction. Through such a process, unacceptable behaviours such as atrocities are re- imagined truths. Most often, the previous regime before the "post", in this case the communist regime, is now remembered as an alien episode, an unnatural interruption to the "natural" flow of the nation's history and the present (seen as free from dogmas, orthodoxies or any

58 For a critical reading of "museumization" in postsocialist eastern Europe see Oksana Sarkisova and Peter Apor, *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008).

ideology) is rendered as a legitimate continuation of the pre-regime period, in this case, as "European" and "democratic".

The socio-political landscape of postcommunist memories is not homogeneous though, it is a highly conflicted terrain in which several competing memories vie to be the truth. Some people call for justice and confessions of past crimes, some call for silence, some call for reconciliation, some look back in anger and some read the past through a nostalgic filter. What they all have in common is that they are selective retrospective responses produced by the perceived necessities of the present. Some scholars argue that, in comparison to the memory of Nazism, communist memory is "'cold' – dispassionate, historicized and contextualized, its condemnation equivocal and hedged."[59] It would be unwise to claim that communist memory in the public space is or is not "cold" or to even engage in any comparison with the collective memory of Nazism in European societies. Such an endeavour would be dubious and may facilitate "competitive martyrology" or "competitive victimhood".[60] A contextualized and historicized memory of communism in itself is not problematic. What is problematic though is its opposite: a "passionate" or "hot" memory. Although this seeming asymmetry in European memory is problematic, engaging in a quest for symmetry for symmetry's sake is of questionable value.

59 Şandru, *Worlds Apart?*, 30.

60 Michal Kopeček, Piotr Wciślik*, Thinking Through Transition: Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989* (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 497. There is an ample critical literature on the phenomenon of "competitive victimhood". For a reading of victimhood in the specific discussion on victimhood between the memory of the Shoah and the Gulag see Emmanuel Droit, 'Le Goulag contre la Shoah: Mémoires officielles et cultures mémorielles dans l'Europe élargie', *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, 2, 94 (2007), 101–20; Slavenka Drakulić, 'Competing for Victimhood. Why eastern Europe says no to refugees', Eurozine, 4 November 2015.

The third focus of the thesis addresses issues of resistance and accommodation[61] as responses and coping strategies with regards to the oppressive character and actions of the totalitarian regime. A valuable strategy is to conceptualize ambivalent resistance as agency in an effort to revisit the ways in which the nature of oppression was understood and conceptualised differently by dissident intellectuals during communism. Thus, "resistance" is not necessarily guided by a moralist lens in an effort to identify heroes and antiheroes of anticommunist resistance, but as a set of efforts aimed at creating "spaces of freedom". Resistance, as a dissident project, suffered a progressive change over the course of time from survival, "aesthetic autonomy", "resistance through culture", antipolitics to the entire set of ideas related to "the power of the powerless" and "living in truth". Intellectuals, be they recruited nomeklatura or dissidents, took part in a continuous process of negotiation with the authorities of socialist regimes. As a result, the cultural field of socialist societies is best described and understood as a mix of strategies of resistance and accommodation with power.[62] Agency in an oppressive regime is a key dilemma and point of analysis in postcolonial and postcommunism studies as it represents a nodal point for issues such as formations of identity, memory and representations of the recent past, imagining the nation, etc. For these reasons postcolonial enquiries into postsocialist spaces is a fruitful endeavour due to the distinctive realities socialist regimes produced. For instance, the fact that socialist regimes created new types of production and consumption, new cultural models, new social types of loyalties and identifications can be interpreted as a form of oppression and enforcement of a new social order. Also, socialist

61 For a general image on the realities of resistance and accommodation for intellectuals under communism see Péter Apor, Sándor Horvath and James Mark, *Secret Agents and the Memory of Everyday Collaboration in Communist Eastern Europe* (London/New York: Anthem Press, 2017); ed. Gerald Segal, *Openness and Foreign Policy Reform in Communist States* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2005); Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society: Political Crises and Their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); ed. András Bozóki, *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999). For studies supporting the thesis of accommodation see Zevedei Barbu's concept of "participatory dictatorship" in *Democracy and Dictatorship: Their Psychology and Patterns of Life* (London: Routledge, 2010); Katherine Verdery's thesis on the resurgence of the national as a frame with which intellectuals during communism engaged with and, ultimately, subverted, national communism in Romania in *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*; Sheila Fitzpatrick on the role of social mobility in undermining the bureaucratic state apparatus in *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

62 See Ioana Macrea-Toma, *Privilighentsia*: *Literary Institutions under Communist Romania [Privilighenția. Instituţii literare în comunismul românesc]* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de ştiinţă, 2009).

regimes aimed at cancelling previous forms of belonging, loyalty and identification such as attachments to the traditional family, the idea of the Christian community, the ethnic and linguistic community, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. This is a form of violence which is bound to have produced tensions and conflicts. The manner in which individuals negotiated these tensions, how subjectivities managed to emerge, how strategies of resistance were devised are of principal relevance to the thesis. The attachment to any forms of collective and individual identification with the past was to be erased and substituted with state-approved new collectivities. It is here that communist regimes, in their practice, converge with industrial capitalism; they were both agents of enforced modernization. Macro social projects and processes that sought to enforce this ideology, such as building an industrial infrastructure and urbanization, advocating for new modern lifestyles and new social rituals that would substitute traditional religious rituals bear a striking resemblance to colonial landscapes.

People from Eastern European societies have produced distinctly new modes of expression and coping strategies during and after communist regimes. Responses to oppressive official ideology constitute a set of counter-discourses that challenge the tenets of dialectical materialism. There are numerous ways in which this happened. For instance, as Barbara Falk argues, anticommunist dissidents made a conscious choice in their dissident corpus to locate their critique of socialist regime within European intellectual traditions, either in Enlightenment thinkers or in thinkers that provided alternative modernities. This choice was, obviously, subversive as it sent the clear message that eastern European countries could follow other avenues for societal growth and viable political projects. Other sets of responses that challenged dialectical materialism were resistance strategies that sought a re-connection with religion. Finally, a slow yet effective subversive response to dialectical materialism was the national frame. Moreover such responses conferred a political

dimension to various forms of expression that sought to deconstruct the language and rhetoric of the state ideology.

Often simplistic narratives about the communist past erase the ambivalence of many individual responses in the face of oppression. This is the so-called “in-between” or “grey area”, a situation in which there is a mutual interpenetration of both complicity and resistance that render survival in settings, such as the communist one, possible. This perpetual exercise of balancing morality, a critical consciousness and survival in a maze of ideological demands led to the phenomenon of disjunction or the splitting of the Self. The contrast between the reality predicated by socialist regimes and the real everyday difficulties individuals endured in those regimes led to a split. This phenomenon is discussed in the literature either as “antipolitical privatism” by Kenneth Jowitt[63] or as simply a gap between the private realm in which individuals would practice freedom and the public in which they would display loyalty towards the regime. Sustaining this situation long term was no easy feat however, and it strained relationships and everyday lives. The private and the public were divided by borders invisible to the unknowing eye and sectors of life compartmentalized into different categories of Selfhood. This normalization of the abnormal produced schizophrenic modes of behaviour as individuals had to creatively split themselves, their thoughts, their ethical guidelines and their actions in a two-levelled space.

For these reasons I suggest responses to totalitarianism and its atrocities which sought spaces of freedom via withdrawal into the inner space of the mind or of the spirit should be interpreted as ambivalent responses. Retreat into culture or religion represented a means of individual survival and silent complicity with the status quo. Retreat from the agora is an ambiguous phenomenon as it represents both a refusal to compromise and risk indoctrination while, resisting the officially-

63 See Kenneth Jowitt, ‘An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems’, *American Political Science Review,* 68 (1974): 1171–91

sanctioned ideology, at the same time, seeking to cultivate the inner life of the spirit in the private realm. Ultimately, refusal to take a public position contributed to the reproduction, legitimacy and continuation of the regime. The communist landscape of resistance and accommodation is complex and cannot be easily adjusted to fit ready-made categories of morality or definitions of "classical" dissidence. There were acts that constituted resistance in the eyes of its beholders because communist regimes established different borders between what did and did not constitute transgression. Most often, there was a mix of everyday acts of resistance together with public support for state ideology. It is difficult to have a final understanding of the political consequences of the role played by the retreat into the private in the fall of the regime. Some scholars argue that these small islands of private freedom enabled the crystallization of critical consciousness and the development of a civic society that ultimately unmasked the criminal nature and falsehood of the regime and led to its downfall. Together with the refusal of public participation, dissident groups called for a return to ethics and a return to truth. It was through culture that they sought and saw the solution and the possibility for change.

Chapter III The modern European imagination, “European-ness” and Geo-graphing “Eastern Europe”

This chapter first presents a critical standpoint on the discourse of “Europe”, “European-ness”, of the invention of “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”. It then explains how east European writers have engaged with these discourses. I draw on literature and scholarly debates about “Europe” to argue that European writers’ ambivalent responses to European-ness are a mix of both internalisation of Otherness and their efforts to achieve autonomy. The term “European-ness” indicates a sense of belonging to the ideal, “Europe” with the values and features it embodies. This thesis considers “Europe” not as immutable, but as a construct that changed throughout history and within various contexts which are explained in detail in the following paragraphs. The analysis of scholarly literature aims to identify how the construction of this term has determined a flawed postsocialist understanding for eastern Europeans. The thesis contends that the discourse of “civilization” has helped establish the idea of “Europe” as a universal ideal, to be emulated and accepted universally. Deconstructing the concept “civilization” as a part of a distinct “European” discourse of power helps illuminate the conditions of possibility for constructing “Europe” as a universal norm. The enduring legacy of this problematic term and the role it plays in east Europeans self-identification are discussed. This chapter provides an understanding of the mechanisms and discursive practices employed in the construction of “Europe” as a “civilization”. The chapter then discusses how the manner in which “Europe” was conceptualised during the Enlightenment and Modernity continues to manifest in enduring knowledge structures. These knowledge structures work as assumptions upon which further knowledge on ‘Europe’ is built. As I explain latter on in this chapter they are ‘the view from nowhere’, the association of the idea of “Europe” with teleological takes on History, Progress and Development or geographical and historical

determinism. In the following section I explain how east European writers have engaged with teleological notions of history and geographical and historical determinism.

Scholars have engaged with the term “Europe” very loosely and in the process have considerably complicated the history of the term. Most scholars used the term instrumentally preferring a safe definition of the idea of “Europe” grounded in Greek mythology. The choice to rely on a myth as a definition of “Europe” is problematic because it obfuscates the more ample political agendas of actually building a moral and cultural entity called “Europe”[1]. These scholars have focused on the so-called foundations of a “European civilization” in the Greek, Roman, Renaissance past and used this historic and cultural heritage to support the notion of a “European civilization”. They sought to “find” and establish the identity of “Europe” through a selection of essential features, invariably invoking a Humanist and Modernist tradition[2]. In these definitions the idea of “Europe” is self-evident and, apparently, in no need of explanation.

The term Europeanism or Europeneity was used by the likes of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi in his 1923 manifesto *Paneuropa* or by Aristide Briand in his 1930 “Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union” in the interwar period with the political aim to unify European states. This project was derived from a shared Paneuropean ideology aimed at easing conflicts caused by the material and territorial frustrations that the peace treaties engendered between European nations in the aftermath of the First World War. This terminology – Europeanism or Europeneity – is part of the many features attributed to the idea of “Europe” and part of the process of constructing “Europe” as a distinct entity. However, its use is limited as it refers to a specific contextual project in the past. Only more recently have scholars used “Europe” in scare

1 See Philippe Wolff, *The awakening of Europe* (London: Penguin, 1968).
2 See Valery, ‘La Crise de l'Esprit’.

quotes to indicate the constructed nature of the term, and an understanding of the historicity of this ideal including its cultural principles and values.

1 “Europe” and Civilization

This first section discusses the meanings of “Europeanness”, the construction of the idea of “Europe” and the ways in which “civilization” within discourses of power have shaped the modern European mind. This discussion is grounded in Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse analysis and structures of power and on Antonio Gramsci's analysis of the concept of “cultural hegemon”. Finally, Hayden White’s critique of historicity as a main pillar in the construction of “Europe” is discussed. Basing his own argumentation on Roland Barthes's semiotic model, White demonstrates how “Europe’s” main pillars – historicity, timelessness, appearance of continuity and ahistorical identification help sustain the discourse of “Europe”.

Universality, central to the discourse of “Europe” as a superior “civilization”, underpins its claims to be a cultural space based on universal values and truths. Concepts such as “civilization”, “progress” and “development”, derived from historical experiences of some European societies, have been universalized and upheld as standards for all non-European societies and cultures to follow. Within the context of empire and colonialist domination, “Europe” as the locus of modernity and civilisation became self-evident. The narrative of a teleological history transformed the “European” experience into a universally valid desirable model to be emulated by all humankind.

The discourse of “Europe” as a civilization with claims to universality was built on the premise that only European “civilization”, with its traditions originating in the world of Antiquity, could have produced “modernity” as the expression of true universal values.[3] However, this claimed teleology

3 Immanuel M. Wallerstein, *European universalism the rhetoric of power* (New York: New Press, 2006), 33.

is easily shattered. Immanuel Wallerstein argues that this claim holds up only as long as the criteria used for establishing its validity are those developed by the discourse itself. In other words, a critical inquiry reveals that the discourse is essentially particularist and ethnocentric. Examining the discourse reveals contextuality and particularity not universality. Wallerstein refers to "a dominant social strata in a particular world-system, that puts forward its own set of doctrines and ethical views that derive from a European context" which is then presented in the language of natural law.[4] Wallerstein further argues that the development of the language of scientific rationalism with its catchword 'natural law' supported claims to European universality. The certainty of science "as incarnated in Newtonian premises about linearity, determinism, and time-reversibility… was translated by Enlightenment thinkers into certainties of progress, especially progress in scientific knowledge".[5]

Gerard Delanty argues that we need to demystify the narrative of a good and noble "Europe", an idea of "Europe" as a project of unity and historical solidarity. To this day, notions such as that of a 'European spirit', associated with Karl Jaspers, or ideas of a unified European tradition are generally accepted. This acceptance is based on myths of origin and etymology, on cultural foundations rooted in the past Latin world of *Respublica Christiana*, and in these enduring humanist values that promote the values of liberal democracy. Indeed, the language in documents of the European Union, the Council of Europe, academia, and European writers reflects this past and thereby supports the vision of an ahistorical homogeneous self-contained entity called "Europe".

One of the most vulnerable points of the discourse on the idea of "Europe" has to do with the supporting pillars that sustain this problematic vision. The discourses that together form the idea of "Europe" – the vision of "Europe" as Christendom, "Europe" as civilization, "Europe" as the West,

4 Wallerstein, *European universalism the rhetoric of power,* 27
5 Wallerstein, 51.

or “Europe” as modernity – are a reflection of the preoccupations and interests of intellectual elites which cannot be extended or generalised to reflect the preoccupations of entire societies. The formation of “Europe” was a top-down process that does not align with the democratic sentiments we have today. The idea of “Europe” does not reflect every day, concrete forms of life and struggle; it is only valid and represents a minority view. As such, the idea of “Europe” is less a matter of actual historical experience for many communities and individuals throughout the continent as it is a product of culture present in the hearts and minds of a privileged few. It would be difficult, if not impossible, on the part of elite writers or intellectuals to claim to speak or represent Europe's silent minorities. The idea of “Europe” is not found in historical events, rather it developed through the language and vocabulary of intellectual and political elites in their rhetoric for supporting competitive society and state projects.[6]

Delanty argues that attempts to construct and express an idea of “Europe” based in shared mythology and culture are historically flawed. He argues, there were no unifying ideas or culture; rather, ideas about “Europe”, are themselves products of historical circumstance. Every age reinvented what “Europe” meant based on what the creating agent's ‘identity’ was. “Europe” was the mirror of what its contextual Other has been at various times. European monarchs, Catholic clergy and European orders of knights' defined “Europe” as the space of Christianity in opposition to the ‘Pagan’ Muslims. European colonialists defined “Europe” as a superior civilization in opposition to the ‘primitives’ they encountered on their voyages. Enlightenment thinkers defined Europe through a civilizational secular lens while the Other became the ‘uncivilized’ or the ‘backward’. During the interwar period – WWI to WWII – “Europe” embodied the idea of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and pacifism. During the Cold War “Europe” meant liberal democracy while the east was ‘confiscated’ by the Communist ideology and was ‘European’ no more. It is perhaps during World War II that the significance of the idea of “Europe” is most

6 Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* 6.

complicated, uncomfortable, ambiguous and the fragility of its construction and “identity” most telling. The agents that used and gave meaning to the idea of “Europe” have themselves changed over time. Empires have fallen and new actors emerged, old social classes have fallen and new ones risen. There is then a need to make clear the fact that ideas are created by shifting agents, in various contexts, for various means, in various languages, to various audiences so as to produce different effects. The idea of “Europe” does indeed have a history, but it is a shifting history, that alters the content of what “Europe” was at various times. “Europe” is thus a cultural construction and not a self-evident reality.

2 The myth of unity and the reality of conflict

A major flaw in claims to shared mythology, culture and values is the myth of unity that insinuates the 'European' idea has attracted and secured an audience who unquestionably identified with its values. Claiming commonality is a technique borrowed from and widely used in the construction of national discourses. This technique constructs the narrative of community with a shared sense of sameness and consciousness in a historical mythical homeland. A historical investigation on the actual events and phenomena that shaped the European continent points towards a contrary narrative. The major line that runs through its history is not a narrative of unity but a narrative of conflict and adversity. The so-called unity “recovered” from the European past was a series of political, military or ideological temporary alliances and not the product of a shared sense of sameness or solidarity. The European idea was the product of conflict not consensus. According to Delanty, a sens of “Europe” was experienced self-consciously in conflict and sustained in opposition to a common enemy.[7] Delanty attributes the ‘European’ idea to an analytic category of identification called ‘macro-identities’, a type of identity process that is crystallized in conditions of divisiveness, rather than unity.

7 Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, 2.

Delanty views the construction of "European identity" as pathological because it is not built around feelings of belonging or solidarity, but rather in continuous opposition to an eternally needed and sought after Other. Similar to Hayden White, Delanty argues that identification is frequently the product of "enforced and violent homogenization"[8] In opposition to what the language of various European Union documents suggest "European identity" is not the description of an accomplished fact. It is instead an ongoing project aimed at instilling a sense of European identity. An identification process based principally on the binary of Us vs Them (the Other) and is fragile, based as it is on exclusivity rather than collective cohesion. This contention is easily identifiable in past epochs in which the discourse of the idea of "Europe" was used. One such epoch was the early Eighteenth century when converted Muslims, the Moriscos, were expelled. This act could be read as part of a larger project that sought the purity of a Christian European polity via homogenization. Another historical act towards supposed "European" unity and the quest for a pure polity was enacted through various pogroms and acts of antisemitism against the Jewish communities in Europe. Europe's Other was redefined. Europe's Other was no longer the external Pagan, but rather an internal enemy. Delanty argues that, as far as most identity-building processes are concerned, the proclaimed homogeneity of a community is rarely a state of fact, but more often implies the intention to carry out a program of violence via that very discourse of purity. Homogeneity is not *a priori,* it is the result of violent projects aimed at fulfilling their intent.[9]

The crucial point from Delanty is that the idea of "Europe" as unity is false and the falsehood is concealed within the narrative of "good and noble Europe". The significance of the Holocaust and how it is recorded is crucial to the idea of "Europe". Some historical narratives downplay the significance of the German National-Socialist racist ideology and the nature of the collaboration

8 Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, Preface, VII.
9 Delanty, 43.

that it enjoyed in Europe in the interwar period. These perspectives frequently restrict this ideology to the German experience or to German-speaking communities throughout Europe that might have felt a sense of belonging to a reunited German Fatherland. Perspectives that seek to minimize the degree of acceptance and collaboration by officials of non-German states and their communities to the Jewish, Roma and Slavic genocide are known in the field of Totalitarian Studies as negationist stances that deny historically-established facts. The Nazi-led genocide throughout Europe is important to this discussion because the German National Socialist ideology, with its quest for racial purity has a longer history. The acceptance, albeit not officially acknowledged, to expel Jewish people, in various European countries at the time dispel the myth of cosmopolitan and multicultural interwar Europe, a historical reference-point for the discourse of European unity. Historians and scholars point towards a fragile balance of powers, both nationally as well as internationally, and a long tradition of antisemitism and racism that was further enhanced by the destruction and economic frustration from the First World War.[10] As Hayden White suggests, the attempt to limit the responsibility for antisemitism to Germany and to treat it as a phenomena external to "Europe" is to deny the significance of institutionalized antisemitism, racism and homogenization in the history of Europe.[11]

Acts of barbarism at the heart of "Europe" as a civilization should not and cannot be denied. The long history of racism, antisemitism and projects aimed at purifying a given 'European' polity is central to any investigation of the idea of "Europe". White interprets negationist approaches to the history of twentieth century racism in Europe as yet another attempt to construct fictionalized narratives of "Europe" and to deny the centrality of barbarism in the construction of "Europe". Denials of the Nazi ideology of purity and the Holocaust as part of the history of the idea of

10 For a discussion on antisemitism in this context see Katherine Sorrels, *Cosmopolitan Outsiders. Imperial Inclusion, National Exclusion, and the Pan-European Idea, 1900-1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

11 Hayden White, 'The Discourse of Europe and the Search for a European Identity,' in ed. Bo Stråth, *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other* (Brussels: P. I. E. Peter Lang 2010) 84-85.

“Europe”, are evidence of the reluctance to accept all of Europe's histories. Moreover, this trend indicates the difficulty of confronting the role that such extremist ideologies had in identity-building projects. For White, “as long as the discourse of Europe continues to treat antisemitism, racism, religious and ethnic intolerance, the violence of the state against its own citizens, and any manifestation of “otherness” as a threat to its own integrity, it will never attain to that condition of self-knowledge that is the defining mark of a civilization that has humanity itself as its goal and aspiration.”[12]

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School provide a critical analysis of the heritage of the Enlightenment for the history of Europe. They are sceptical about the possibility of a future humanist 'European identity' in the aftermath of the Holocaust and state-organized genocides throughout the continent. This is why scholars must critically re-assess the process of creating “Europe” through a discourse of universality, historicity and unity.

A critical analysis of “Europe” must be grounded in historical facts, argues Gerard Delanty. Furthermore, he argues that the only valid historical pursuit is one which recognizes all of Europe's historical narratives, including those that tell the story of divisions and frontiers.[13] Quests to “discover” Europe are questionable as they retrospectively invent Europe to serve contemporary needs. In the work of writers such as Milan Kundera[14] and Paul Valery, the past is not remembered; it is reinvented.

12 White, ‘The Discourse of Europe and the Search for a European Identity’, 85.
13 Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* 3.
14 Kundera, ‘Un Occident kidnappé.’

3 The lack of a real tradition of a shared sense of belonging to “Europe”

In this section the historical contexts that have shaped various “incarnations” and visions of what “Europe” stood for are discussed. A deconstruction of the idea of “Europe” needs to address the pillars that enable this discourse and construct its historicity. As such I now turn to a context-specific discussion on these pillars. There are a number of contexts that have shaped the various “incarnations” and visions of what “Europe” stands for. They start from the idea of “Europe” read through the discourse of Christendom, then the “Age of Discovery”, followed by Enlightenment discourses of civilization, the Nineteenth-Twentieth century discourse of culture and finally the idea of “Europe” in the ideological language of the Cold War.

3.1 The idea of “Europe” as *Respublica Christiana*

Christianity contributed to the establishment of order in a heterogeneous Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Christians enjoyed a degree of homogeneity through the use of Latin as a common language for celebrating mass. However, this community “glue” could only be assumed to have produced a superficial sameness and sense of belonging within lay people given that Latin could only be spoken, written and read among clerical elites, as alphabetization and knowledge of Latin were a privilege of the high social strata, laic and clergy. It is reasonable to assume however, that membership of the Christian church would have instilled a sense of belonging to a more homogeneous community in which ethnic groups coming from various cultural traditions could come together under a common aegis showing Christian unity against a common enemy, the “Pagan”. Coming together under the sign of the Holy Roman Church conferred upon the Christian community of Western European territories a previously lacked reference-point for identification.

La Reconquista was celebrated within the Christian community as the regaining of a previous status and a re-balance of powers in the continent and the Mediterranean world, but this was a fragile, contextual and temporary identification that held only as long as a common enemy, a radical Other, the Pagan, was invoked. Ordinary experiences of Christian life in the absence of an external threat in the form of an Other lacked real significance in a world of considerably different social realities for various groups. The much invoked Christian conscience was a contextual identification that meant little in real life experiences. Christian crusades, beyond their legitimized religious purpose, served as a means for knightly orders to establish themselves as a social class within Christianity. With the continuous power tensions between Church institutions and laic structures alike, such a claim was no easy endeavour. The Catholic Church eventually managed to achieve relative homogenization within the *Respublica Christiana*. However, adherence and its members' sense of belonging could only be superficial given the heterogeneous reality of division, conflict and struggle that characterized the world of the Middle Ages and early Modernity.[15]

3.2 "Europe" as the "Age of Discovery"

The so-called "Age of Discovery" provided another point for the crystallization of the idea of 'European" unity or identity. Implicit in the word "discovery" is the idea that places and people, who lacked a proper identity, were waiting to be "found" by Europeans. As they were not figured in the minds and maps of European colonial powers, they simply did not have a prior existence. The integration of new territories into the imagination of European explorers and colonialists further solidified a "European" identity. "Europe" was now defined in opposition to the new encountered peoples. Thus, the experience of conquest and colonialism fuelled the myth of European civilization's triumph over natural frontiers and superiority to others. The identity of "Europe" was

15 Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* 42.

no longer shaped only by opposition to the Eastern Other, the Pagan attributed at various times to the Ottomans or to Moors, but by encounters with people throughout the world.

3.3 "Europe" as Modernity

During the Age of Modernity the idea of "Europe" shifted from its former relation between Christendom and Islam into a new relation of Otherness, that between civilization and nature.[16] It is important to note that newly-gained colonial power happened concurrently with the development of science. The type of knowledge produced in the newly "discovered" territories, people and cultures was 'scientific' and 'objective'. Assumptions that knowledge produced about the colonies was accurate was based on the notion that direct observation implied no standpoint and no bias. It followed that knowledge which came as a result of direct observation, even when produced by the coloniser, could only be objective and hence scientifically solid. This nexus between power and science led to knowledge production that shaped modern Europe's understanding of the world and of itself. Gradually, the idea of "Europe" had become normative.

The Enlightenment left one of the most enduring marks on our idea of "Europe"; an unshakeable belief in scientific truth. However, its heritage is very much the subject of debate. In theory, Enlightened thinkers were engaged in a struggle to break knowledge free from the Church's dominion, but scholars Zygmunt Bauman and Gerard Delanty, rightfully ask: to what extent can we speak of a genuine break with the past?[17] After all, the reality that the Catholic Church had shaped in Western societies could not be easily discarded. The Church left enduring belief-structures embedded within Christian humanist ideals, including universal systems, order, hierarchies and totalities. These structures were altered by the Enlightenment and a new understanding of the world was formed as universality was focused around the principles of Reason, Progress and Science. The

16 Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* 65.

17 See Zygmunt Bauman, 'Europe of Strangers,' *Transnational Communities Programme Working Paper Series*, (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1998). Available at: http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working_papers.htm.

universal nature of ideals of equality and justice from the French Revolution were familiar to old Christian belief-structures. Religious adherence continued to survive in new institutionalized structures and partnerships between the secular and the clerical. The world continued to be understood in teleological terms as the idea of redemption, central to the Christian humanist myth of man, found a new expression in the discursive practices of History as Progress and "Civilization" as the means. This system provided the basis for a new understanding of "Europe" that had reconciled the Enlightenment with its Christian heritage. As Delanty writes "Europe was more likely after 1648 than ever before to believe in the universality of truth, the essential unity of humanity and the redemptive idea of history."[18]

3.4 "Europe" in the Age of Angst

The period between the nineteenth and the twentieth century was marked by a romantic discourse of "Europe" in which the past was viewed through the lens of nostalgia. Disenchantment with modern society and angst regarding the changes brought about by new technologies had triggered a counter-modernist movement, and an adoration of the past glory of fallen empires. Poets, intellectuals, and especially an emerging new bourgeoisie eager to emulate the European aristocracy, actively engaged in re-inventing the past through the practice of Grand Tours, cultural voyages to Greek and Roman sites of antiquity aimed at providing a classical education.[19] However, the narratives that this social stratum produced on the idea of "Europe" could not be more selective in their re-invention or socially restrained as an experience. By retrospectively creating continuities with past epochs the bourgeoisie sought its own redemptive solution to the ills of modernity as it dreamt of times long past. The landscape and reality that this social class produced was more "real" than the Grand Tours which became a cultural institution. However, the dream of classical and cosmopolitan Europe was

18 Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, 68-9.
19 Delanty, 80-81.

consumed only by the privileged and had little to do with the real history that various groups experienced.

3.5 "Europe" between the capitalist West and the socialist East

During the Cold War the idea of "Europe" continued to be constructed and reconstructed through a process of othering. The Cold War resulted in a system that legitimated war and produced a rhetoric of terror. By invoking a vilified Other, Cold War actors exercised violence against their internal dissenters. As Mary Kaldor argues "the two systems were not in conflict but were complementary".[20] Importantly, the Cold War created another misguided heritage, an ideological frame through which historical phenomena were to be understood and interpreted. Contemporary European countries inherited an unscrutinized Cold War vocabulary through which political actors and intellectuals alike interpreted post Cold War realities. Social, political and economic explanations as to why the communist project collapsed were largely dismissed. The type of knowledge that informed readings of communism during the postsocialist period most often originated from what Verdery and Chari call "World-bank orthodoxy". This was a series of approaches to managing the post-regime situation in the realm of academia, and in political and economic reorganisation. The neoliberal policies of "shock-therapy" were far more extensive than economic reforms. The Chicago School's assumptions about unilateral development and free-markets as a model of societal progress influenced knowledge about the legacy of communism and eastern European societies. The capitalist model of the "West" was the only valid one.[21] Good triumphed over Evil and a supposedly historical Europe was restored, as a liberal, capitalist entity. "Europe" was reconstructed in the image of the "West". All the complexity of the various communist experiences were amassed into a single simplifying and mystifying historical narrative.

20 Mary Kaldor, *Europe from Below: An East-West Dialogue* (London/New York: Verso, 1991), 35.
21 The Chicago School is a neoclassical economic school of thought that originated at the University of Chicago in the 1930s advocating for free markets and minimal state intervention in economy.

4 Creating the fiction of "Europe"

As argued earlier, European civilization and claims to universality are 'fictions'. The process by which the idea of "Europe" as a model for society was transformed from a set of values into a set of norms is problematic. Delanty argues:

> cultural spheres of reference are not themselves universalizable; they cannot claim absolute validity; they are merely cultural resources of meaning. The idea of Europe is not then a normative model and its continued association with universal ethical claims is an invasion and reification of a moral space, which is not the privilege of any single culture.[22]

Hayden White's argument is similar to that of Delanty. White argues that contemporary efforts to salvage an image of a "good and noble Europe" leave out crucial historical episodes that conceal how "Europe" has been produced. The idea of "Europe", as a lexeme, is a highly unstable and nebulous constructed entity:

> 'Europe' has never existed anywhere except in discourse, which is to say, in the talk and writing of visionaries and scoundrels seeking an alibi for a civilization whose principal historical attribute has been an impulsion to universal hegemony and the need to destroy what it cannot dominate, assimilate, or consume as if by right divine.[23]

Here White contests the very notion that a latent European identity existed, waiting simply to be uncovered. He regards claims of an a priori Europe with scepticism and as quests to legitimize the pursuit of political and economic interests. He argues that identity-building projects, such as the case of "Europe", seek homogenization via essences and purity. For White, the idea of "Europe" as a cultural ideal or unity cannot escape its previous problematic incarnations. In this respect White is uncompromising: "Europe names a culture that is predominantly antagonistic with respect to all of

22 Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* 85.
23 White, 'The Discourse of Europe', 67.

its Others. Its drive is to dominate, assimilate, absorb, transform, and where it cannot transform, destroy whatever is different from itself."[24]

This lack of coherence about "Europe" is related to the way in which identification processes work, how discourses construct identities and endow them with ideas of essence. White argues that every identification implies a process of re-identification, the construction of truths, of timelessness, and de-contextualized ahistorical "identities". White uses Roland Barthes's semiotic model for analyzing systems built on discursive regimes in order to illustrate how identity-building projects endow objects with meaning.[25] Barthes's analysis consists in a matrix of four techniques of discursivity that 'establish' the identity of an object: assertion of existence, the assertion of the species, the assertion of artifice and the assertion of accent. These techniques consist of naming the object, thereby placing it into the desired imaginary world of the discourse. It endows the object with an essence which, outside the regime of discursivity, would otherwise be insubstantial or useless. It is futile to go through a "history" of the term "Europe" in order to reveal its discontinuities because scholarly research seeking a historicity or a genealogy of the use of the term "Europe" in the real historical past are in error from the outset. For White, what is to be re-interrogated within this discourse is the relationship between the idea of "Europe" and the allure of historicity that the notions of tradition and barbarism enjoy in the discourse of "Europe".

5 "Europe", History and Tradition

Most scholarly analysis of discourses relating to the idea of "Europe" fall into a determinist trap of equivalencies. Investigations on the nature of "European culture" lead to insights into Europe's "identity" which, in turn, result in a reiteration of Europe's 'identity' as a culture with a history, as

24 White, 'The Discourse of Europe', 70.
25 See Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System,* trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

opposed to other cultures that are pre- or non-historical. According to White with whom I agree, the idea of "Europe", in research, must be liberated from its supposed historical continuity as it incarnates the very idea of historicity. Historicity is a discursive construction, not a given framework within which we should posit research questions. "Historicity" is used within the discourse of a unified "Europe" as an essential aspect of its existence, supporting the myth of European cultural superiority by virtue of its unique progressive history. This operation of "historicity" assures a position from which the subject of the discourse can pontificate to people of other cultures how to achieve that normative status. We then produce, via discursive means, a chain of equivalences that are transformed into a chain of identifications: "Europe" equals "History" equals "civilization" equals "humanity". "Identity" is then inextricably linked to history, science and civilization. This operation supports the claim European civilization possesses the essence of being civilized, that is, "civilizationality".[26] The establishment and acceptance of such notions then sets the terrain for the acceptance of a normative measure in the name of such concepts.

6 The idea of "civilization", uses of "civilization" as a conceptual tool and as discourses of power

The discussion now turns to a critical reading of the critical literature on "civilization" foregrounding the themes, debates, points of contention and mechanisms of power that help shape the discourse of Europe. Discourses of "Civilization" were deployed widely during the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century in emerging nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe. These discourses had wide currency in the region and were successful in creating a shared sense of nationhood among the so-called "young" European nation-states. The intellectual and political elites of these small European nations later adopted the discourse as an identity marker that suggested belonging to Europe. Thus, invoking the status of "civilized" meant, within that particular context, becoming a fully-fledged nation-state, with the rule of law, the social and political reforms of the

26 White, 'The Discourse of Europe', 78.

epoch and that, accordingly, belonged to Europe. Scholarly works on the subject of civilization are diverse and divided. Attempts to systematize and create a methodological framework for the study of "civilization" mostly bear the mark of the epistemological and ideological turns of the epochs in which they were written. This ranges from attempts to adjust the meaning of civilization so that it fits into a colonial and commercial rationale such as that of Mackinder and Oswald Spengler's cyclic approach to civilizations, or those that provide a global system for civilizations that remain, nevertheless, ingrained in a reductionist European understanding such as that of Toynbee or Wallerstein.[27] The critical reading of this literature explains the construction of a distinct European imaginary. It is this imagination of space that has fuelled the common sense character and endurance of the concept of "civilization" as an unchallenged mark of "European-ness". The discussion reveals how this geopolitical imagination is based upon an objectified perspective of space in the arts, which developed in Europe during the Renaissance and was strengthened by the Cartesian perspective in natural sciences.

The notion of "civilization" both as an idea and as a normative ideal is among the most problematic concepts in the social sciences. Its long history and umbrella-like usage has made it a difficult object of study. Its various uses and interpretations express the epistemological and ideological turns of the historical epochs in which it was developed. "Civilization" was and continues to be prominent in political and media discourse, and in academic discourse as a conceptual tool, in the singular, in Civilization Studies, and in the plural, when compared to other civilizations. Obviously, extracting the term from one discursive regime to another has consequences for its meaning and interpretation. The study of "civilization" (in the singular) and comparative studies of civilizations (in its plural form) has gone hand in hand with the development of the field of anthropology and ethnography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This led to an enduring view that

27 See Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London: Windham Press, 2013); Immanuel M. Wallerstein, *European universalism: the rhetoric of power* (New York: New Press, 2006).

“civilizations” are self-contained, homogeneous units, with a distinct moral milieu in the world system of civilizations. Uses of “civilization” in the singular are associated with a normative understanding in which “civilisation” is viewed as an ideal to be emulated by all cultures and societies throughout the world.

In the politically unstable global landscape of the Cold War with its oversimplified vocabulary, “civilization” became prominent again. From this viewpoint the geopolitical world was thus divided into intelligible pieces that all fit neatly together. On one side was the world of civilized, thus developed states. On the other were the developing states that suffered disenchantment with their communist adventures and decided to get back on the “right” track again by emulating the capitalist model. The normative concept of' “civilization” is thus expected to perform the task of a global yardstick with which to measure and judge cultures and societies throughout space and history. The nature of this task is two-sided. It must have the ability to impose its own righteous authority and, at the same time, it must condemn any act of transgression from the established norm. The rationalization process that accompanies this performance must make a careful selection of language and legitimization techniques. The discourse of rationalization of “civilization” as a normative model is based on the idea that there is a process which societies and cultures can follow to become “civilized”, a process which culminates in the status of “civilized”. It is interesting to note that History, as a general linear and deterministic process of progress for all cultures and societies, becomes the very objective force that brings about this process of reaching the status of civilization. This Modernist narrative shows that “civilization” is used, within this particular discourse, as a value and a normative idea. This feature entails an extension of the understanding of this concept. It is meant to convey the idea that there are a number of readily and easily observable objective features in the world that together comprise “civilization” and, at the same time, it is used

as a value-judgment that allows the observer to divide the observed world into categories of "civilized" and "uncivilized" on a hierarchical scale.

As a conceptual tool "civilization" has had a long history. The term was used alongside concepts such as 'culture' and 'society' in the developing fields of ethnography and sociology. *Grosso modo*, the two so-called "culturalist" approaches to the study of "civilization" (in the singular and plural) are the French School with the works of Emile Durkheim and in the German School with the works of Max Weber on the comparative analysis of civilizations. Durkheim defined sociology as the science of the study of "civilization" with the individual at its centre. Despite Durkheim's focus on social reproduction and the apparent neutrality of social values in his writings, it is worth noting that Durkheim's interest in the study of comparative civilizations stems from a normative moral understanding of "civilization".[28] For Durkheim, morality is equated with sociality. Weber takes a comparative history approach to the study of 'cultural worlds'. In the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber interrogates the relationship between religious traditions and broader cultural horizons of rationality. He argues that the radical shift towards Protestantism in the history of Western Europe has contributed to a new understanding of rationality.

These first programmatic frameworks for the study of civilizations and the conceptualization of "civilization" corresponded to the emergence of sociology, the study of society and social phenomena. Fernand Braudel and Claude Levi-Strauss's approaches to the study of civilization mark a departure from the culturalist views. Braudel's analysis establishes a *longue durée* perspective of the material and environmental structures that contribute to the establishment and endurance of civilizations. Levi-Strauss's analysis is a radical critique of "civilization" in the

28 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman, ed. Mark S. Cladis (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

singular. He argues that man is self-delusional to think nature and knowledge are mastered by sheer will and thinking in this way leads to self-alienation.

French historian Lucien Febvre made a distinction between the study of civilization and that of civilizations. For Febvre, the study of "civilizations" could be a neutral, "ethnographic" endeavor comprised of a set of observable social features free of value judgment. He states:

> when we are talking about the progress, failures, greatness and weakness of civilization we do have a value judgement in mind. We have the idea that the civilization we are talking about – ours – is itself something great and beautiful; something too which is nobler, more comfortable and better, both morally and materially speaking, than anything outside it – savagery, barbarity or semi-civilization. Finally, we are confident that such civilization, in which we participate, which we propagate, benefit from and popularize, bestows on us all a certain value, prestige, and dignity. For it is a collective asset enjoyed by all civilized societies. It is also an individual privilege which each of us proudly boasts that he possesses.[29]

However, there is a residual value judgement implied in Febvre's explanation of "civilization". His definition of "civilization" is a description of a historically specific socio-political group of urbanized middle-class Europeans. "Civilization" thus becomes a de-contextualized, atemporal concept that can be used in moralist rhetoric. In such instances, it is employed as a criterion to measure other cultures and societies as "non-civilized". Once this norm has been established it is impossible to set about a value-free, judgment-free study of comparative civilizations. Moreover, an understanding of "civilization" that is in fact highly contextualized, but represented as universal is unhelpful.

Febvre's claim to the possibility of a neutral study of civilizations is dismissed by German sociologist Norbert Elias who argues that Western civilization, even as it produces knowledge of new territories cannot see them as its equal. Within a contextualized vision of what "civilization" is, in moral, political, social, religious and cultural terms the European-self is unable to view the

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29 Lucien Febvre, 'Une histoire de la Civilisation', *Annales*, 5-4, (1950): 490-4.

concept of "civilization" as anything but a model and a value to be emulated. For Elias, the concept of "civilization" itself is an expression of "the self-consciousness of the West … It sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or "more primitive" contemporary ones".[30]

Comparative studies of civilizations in the social sciences have prompted a rethinking of the relationship between "civilization" as an ideal and the idea of progress. Since "civilization" as a normative ideal suggests a linear path for all human cultures and societies, it seems natural to interrogate how this particular vision relates to the idea of Progress in history. "Civilization" and "progress" entered the history of ideas during the same period so a consideration of one concept often lead to discussion of the other. Progress, as an ideological construction, is teleological. The narrative of Progress emphasizes its cumulative character and the continuous improvement of the collective, be it culture or society. This improvement was understood both in historical and spatial terms. European colonizers often compared "newly found" indigenous populations to previous stages of human evolution, and described them as lagging behind in terms of world progress. Europeans understood the world in terms of evolution, with some more advanced than others, but all heading in the same direction. The discourse of the nineteenth century is a discourse of totalities. Local, contextualized histories with their complex ambiguities are absent from a narrative of universal history. The history of mankind is but one. And because history is written by the observer, the history of European "civilization", or what is deemed as European civilization at a particular time, is the history of mankind. The societies and cultures studied by the newly-founded discipline of anthropology were categorized, according to the "standards" of civilization, and hierarchically organized in terms of their presumed progress. The concept of "civilization" was descriptive and evaluative and degrees of "civilization" could be measured through a universal evaluative test.

30 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, revised edn., trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford/Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 5.

7 The Modern European imagination, naturalization of knowledge, critical geopolitics, the produced nature of space

Many developments, including the possibility to see, imagine and assume to know the world as a structured whole, led to the crystallization of a distinctive 'modern European imagination'. European imperial “discovery”, as the narrative goes, and appropriation of new territories led to the crystallization of a generally-shared teleological view that 1) the world is the sum of its parts, unstructured prior to European discovery; 2) places and civilizations were ordered hierarchically and 3) all civilizations, understood as “mankind”, moved towards a knowable and linear historical destiny of progress, a process that culminates ultimately in reaching the ideals of European civilization. The modern imagination of space thus bore the mark of European historical, social and cultural experience that led to a Eurocentrist understanding and evaluation of this modernist imagination. Moreover, these Eurocentric understandings and practices were emulated in other parts of the world and became, with time, a matter of conventional wisdom, an unchallenged universal truth about how certain things are[31].

In order to understand the pervasiveness and endurance of the geopolitical imagination as a defining element of modernity, I critically analyse the elements of this construction which may be formulated as follows: a vision of the world as a whole, the “view from nowhere”, and, a taxonomy of differentiation. The development of modern cartography facilitated a shared sense of the world as a whole and the growing currency of terms such as “humanity” and “mankind”. The geopolitical imagination thus transcended the spatial limits imposed by everyday life enabling people to conceive the world as a picture.[32] This shared perspective of wholeness, the idea of the world-as-a-

31 John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 6.
32 Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 11.

whole, as a “view from nowhere”, was continuously reinforced in spite of changing economic and technological circumstances.

The second element of the modern imagination a “view that could claim to be *a view from nowhere* [is]: an objective view of the world as from outer space”[33] which is served to legitimize a partial view of the world. This 'view from nowhere' together with the method of 'direct observation’ led to the formation of a standard scientific model of knowing. The “acquisition” of ‘objectivity’ led to the development of a scientific claim to unbiased and objective knowledge of places and things despite the fact that this 'knowledge' was always positioned, contextualized, subjective and serving particular interests. The world and its material representations, maps, is an apparent result of direct observation and objectivity.

A third implication of the modern geopolitical imagination is value-judgments and the subsequent division of the world into places of greater or lesser value. Places were attributed meaning and value through naming. The world was divided into “advanced” as opposed to “primitive”, “civilized” as opposed to “uncivilized”, “modern” as opposed to “backward”. The European public could know the newly discovered territories through maps, which became tools for attributing value.

Maps are a fertile site for investigating the modern imagination because they represent particular views of the world. The maps produced in the colonial period shared two features. They were centred around a Eurocentric vision of the world and they established hierarchical representations of space. According to John Agnew:

33 Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 11.

> The power of the maps lies in their masking of these features behind a veneer of objectivity. The selectivity that went into the construction of the maps is never made evident. The reader has to presume a fairly close approximation between the maps and what lay 'out there' in the world beyond immediate experience.[34]

Maps and map-making as a political practice after the age of geographical "discoveries" differed greatly from ancient maps. The new element of direct experience with what was previously unknown led to a different view of the world and peoples' place in it. As Agnew argues: "This gave a sense of both ubiquity and omnipotence that Ptolemy had lacked. The world now could be both thought of and experienced as a whole."[35] Participants in this grand enterprise now had the power and the license to speculate about the world. Places and their identity could now be invented. Everything was to find its "rightful" meaning in this order of things. Maps were not mere representations of the world, they were subjective and part of a political process that helped constitute the world as they were the source of knowledge of what the world was.

8 A new understanding of space. Implications for time and history

The perspectival conception represented a massive shift in the modern consciousness regarding the relation of the self to the world. Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi's development of the linear technique during the Renaissance radically shaped the modern imagination of space. Initially, a technique to give depth to bi-dimensional space in paintings, Brunelleschi's formulation of linear perspective came to govern pictorial depictions of space and contribute to an enduring way of seeing and understanding the relationship between the observer and the observed. Although this perspective originated in the arts it contributed to an empiricist conception of knowledge. It assumes that the world perceived by the observer is the world "out there", that the standpoint of the observer does not determine that which is observed and is thus "the view from nowhere". This

34 Agnew, ***Geopolitics,***19.
35 Agnew, 19.

perspective introduced the idea that an object, seen from an external point, is unaltered by the painter. This understanding of linearity was not restricted to the milieu of the arts; it constituted the world view of the Renaissance with significant consequences. The Renaissance perspective that influenced interpretation and dictated a specific way of experiencing the arts has endured and shaped modern naturalist sciences. The experience of knowing was contextualised within this field of perspective. As Agnew explains this perspective is from:

> the eye of the beholder... The convention called those appearances reality. Perspective makes the single eye the center of the visible world. Everything converges on the eye as the vanishing point of infinity. The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged by God.[36]

9 Renaissance understanding of linear perspective influenced Cartesian perspectivalism

Within Cartesian perspectivalism the world is approached from the viewpoint of a natural scientist since the world that is studied is the reality out there and there is no relationship between the scientist who observes and what is observed. The external world – that which is observed – awaits observation and the process of observation is always direct, untarnished by any part of the process. At this time, the scientist had no awareness of a choice of perspective that could alter that which was observed. The relationship between the viewing subject and the viewed object that derives from this understanding is central to the idea of a neutral gaze. Systems of knowledge, especially the natural sciences, were most influenced by this neutral gaze. Because the method of sight and observation is perceived as a neutral way of approaching the studied world, a sense of simultaneity of the observed occurs. This resulted in study based on sight and observation focusing on the static rather than dynamic aspects of the observed. The outcome resulted in a preference for fixed essences over ephemeral qualities.

36 John Berger as cited by Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 21.

In his ground breaking theory on the production of space Henri Lefebvre analyzes how, against a background of industrialization, urbanization and modernity, everyday social practices determine spatial practices. Although practices and experiences of space had changed considerably by the beginning of the twentieth century, a more ample perception of the perspectivalist space remained present in knowledge-production and dissemination. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre claims that space is a social product based on values, which affects spatial practices and perceptions. There is an obvious shift in Lefebvre's research agenda from a static, timeless, space-oriented view to a process-oriented perspective. To focus on the multiplicity of socially-produced spaces and their connection to practices and the power relations embedded in those practices was innovative and introduced a new way of engaging with social data. Lefebvre's conclusion that the social production of space is a tool for the reproduction of social class has proven fertile for subsequent research and has provided a methodological framework for studying the political use of space in modern societies.

The shift from the temporal to the spatial perspective affected knowledge-production. In other words, the introduction of the perspective of the fixed eye would play a greater role in the manner in which knowledge about the world was shaped than the role previously played by time. A major implication of this perspective is that a simultaneous and synchronic rather than a historical and diachronic understanding and elaboration of knowledge was privileged. That which the educated social stratum observed within the social realm was not approached in temporal, historical terms, but from an implicit understanding of synchronicity. Historical narratives that meant phenomena were understood and represented as fixed, temporally specific events, were now flattened within the modern imagination, becoming essentialized and atemporal.

It is not uncommon to find research studies in the social sciences that express a vision of space in an essentialized manner, that is, to find expression of time, understood as various 'development' stages, in spatial terms. All too often explanations about possible causes of certain cultural phenomena are offered in spatial terms as if a region of the world is a timeless, ahistorical, homogeneous and unchanged entity. The enduring legacy of the modernist gaze lingers in the narratives that accompany expert "explanations" of the war in postcommunist Yugoslavia for instance. The expert opinion that accompanied studies on the conflict described the events using the inherited vocabulary and mindset of the modern imagination since, as the argument went, the violence of the disintegration of Yugoslavia emerged from ancient ethnic conflicts or because of a supposedly "savage" and violent "Balkan" mentality. Within these narratives conflict is a permanent cultural feature that simply belongs to a given region. The complex nature of nation states and the changes that they go through are absent in these narratives. What is offered as a generally satisfactory explanation for most phenomena occurring in east European societies is a reductive view in which regions are simply containers for statements about their enduring characteristics. There is an obvious tendency to continue to mix the language of space and time. The spaces that were deemed by the modern imagination as "primitive" and "backward" during colonialism now work as cognitive frames from where explanations are drawn. The complexity of present day phenomena is reduced to "age old" enduring characteristics expressed in spatial terms. This kind of reasoning is problematic as it enables three intellectual operations: the first is to essentialize places and identities, the second is to render exotic through an overemphasis on cultural differences and a marginalization of similarities, the third is a tendency to totalize by rendering relative differences into absolute differences.[37]

Greatly influenced by Cartesian perspectivalism Mackinder's vision of space established the basis for a new manner of approaching and conceptualizing the world. What renders Mackinder's

37 Agnew, *Geopolitics,* 36.

geographical gaze so particular is the claim upon which it is built, world space is a fully known and closed system, the world is fully knowable. The language that Mackinder uses exposes the unquestioned and self-centric character of his assumptions as the world did not exist both prior to the "discovery" as well as to its "observer". For Mackinder space is deemed relevant and therefore existent, only when the observer takes it into consideration. The assumptions of objectivity and 'view from nowhere' that sustain this view are the tenets of the modern imagination of space. Mackinder's exposé is, *par excellence*, a Cartesian perspective for the subject who observes is assumed to be detached from the object observed. The perspective is absent from the equation as if it were not there. What is unfolding before the sight of the observer is the world as it is. An act of distancing is produced as objectification takes place. As if that which is being described and evaluated is not being produced by the gaze. The products that convey this modern understanding of space – encyclopedias, museums, world exhibitions, maps, atlases – are summoned to bring the objective reality to the beholder. They convey the truth about the world.

In his conceptualization of space Mackinder successfully conquers history by spatializing it as historical epochs now subscribed to a geopolitical logic. He divides the world map and names parts of it according to the logic of the observer-now-producer. The domain of the natural and spatial take over the domain of the temporal and historical. By producing a material representation of the world through maps and by naming, and by doing so creating essentialist units as objects with a function, Mackinder creates enduring identities. The perspective, the contours, the divisions, the dimensions, the names, the boundaries are stable entities for the viewer. Moreover, these entities are seemingly engaged in an ahistoric, atemporal conflict due to their geographical determinants. Engagement in war and competition over sea-power and commerce are not political and economic but a natural choice of colonial imperial powers. It is the way things are. The fuzziness of a chaotic world was ordered. This manner of representation is similar to the tenets of the political realist approach in

international relations and political sciences. It is a manner of presenting world events and phenomena as eternal, obscuring the causes and agents of these events and, most importantly, making them appear inevitable, nature-given, and not man-made. Ó Tuathail calls this form of reasoning "epistemological imperialism", a practice that uses Eurocentric standards of measurement to evaluate spatial areas as it:

> seeks to secure the claims of particular Western places and powers to write the history and geography of all. The geopolitical gaze, in other words, is itself profoundly geo-political; it seeks to enforce the vision of space and power of a certain metropolitan spatial and political order over those marginalized groups, either within metropolitan societies or within the colonies, who would contest that order.[38]

Scholars in Critical Geography such as Ó Tuathail integrate the role power relations play in determining spatial practices. As such one of their aims is to de-colonialize knowledge.[39] Political philosophy theories, such as those of Michel Foucault, have been adapted by scholars of Critical Geography in order to identify geographical discourse as a form of knowledge and power. Critical geographers redefined and re-conceptualized geopolitics as a discursive practice. These researchers have deconstructed the myth of geopolitics as a site of objective knowledge. Critical Geography focuses on the produced nature of knowledge and analyses the role of elite agents engaged in knowledge-production. Critical Geography researchers argue that spatial and discursive practices of "civilization" centre around a teleological conception of meaning. A discourse, such as the discourse on "civilization(s)" that attributes values of meaning to various areas of the world, both in cultural and spatial terms, is inscribed in a teleological process.

38 Agnew and Ó Tuathail, 'Geopolitics and discourse', 42-3.
39 Agnew and Ó Tuathail, 'Geopolitics and discourse', 192.

10 Beyond “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”: Subjectivity in eastern Europe

I turn now to the main types and processes of self-identification in eastern Europe, including the discourses of “European-ness” and “Civilisation” in the eastern part of Europe, namely “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”. While the previous section highlighted the mechanisms underlying the process of constructing the notion of “European-ness” and the ideologized uses of this term, in this section I discuss the engagement with and reception of the notion of “European-ness” in eastern Europe. I do this by interrogating local responses to the ideological constructs of “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”. The discourse of “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”, stem from the larger discursive frame of “European-ness”. These discourses have shaped the reality of the region in the realm of the imagination, in the collective self-identification of ethnic or religious groups or have been a source of national genesis myth-making. Finally, the engagement with these discourses produced an exclusionary symbolic geography referred to as “nesting Orientalism” or self-colonisation.

For all the initial reluctance in the region to engage with postcolonial critique in general and Edward Said's thesis on Orientalism in particular, there are however scholarly efforts that highlight these ideological constructs. Generally speaking, this research has gained credibility. The fact that “European-ness”, the invention of “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism” are discourses that shaped self-identification processes in the region is a now an established phenomenon.[40] What continues to be debated though is the persistence of such identity discourses in the everyday social and political realm of the region. In other words, what influence might these discourses have had in the production of “Eastern Europe”? If this question is not addressed seriously by examining the variety and richness of local responses there is a real danger of simply producing a type of reiterated

40 See Goldsworthy. *Inventing Ruritania*; Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans*; Wolff. *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Bakic-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms’. I discuss this literature in the following paragraphs.

knowledge. In her own work Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova is especially interested in discussing local agency in her exploration of local engagement with Orientalist and Eurocentric discourses. For the same reason that is what I aim for in my project. The problem that needs to be understood is whether "European-ness", "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" have produced tangible realities in the social and political landscape. It is crucial to establish a connection between the discourse and responses of local agents such as Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić, the writers I discuss. The analysis needs to view these engagements in an inter-related manner as a process of negotiation between being simultaneously aware of an external gaze in a position of power that casts categories and hierarchies of value and, at the same time, examining the agency and sites of empowerment in the region.

This brief analysis of an imaginary value-laden map of eastern Europe is a difficult undertaking as it needs to consider two sources of hegemony: one is the cultural hegemon of "European-ness" and its corollaries, "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" and the second is the socialist experience. Local regional responses to the ideological discourses of "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism" can be found in expressions of self-understanding and self-identification by intellectuals. Local responses to these discourses manifest in discussions of liminality, identity defined in terms of ambiguity or ambivalence, and reliance on the metaphor of the bridge to describe precarious identities or the state of "in-between-ness" as an existential condition used to denote the experience of belonging to the ideologized imagined space of "Eastern Europe" or the "Balkans". I identify these processes and self-designations as 'internalization of Otherness', where other authors prefer the phrase 'colonization of the mind' or 'mind-colonization'.

11 Mapping out and problematizing “Eastern Europe” and “the Balkans”

The construction of the notion of “European-ness” and “Eastern Europe” as its corresponding Other has an intellectual tradition that dates back to the Renaissance.[41] The construction of an homogeneous “Eastern Europe” as a distinct idea was shaped during the Enlightenment. The processes of Othering peaked in Eastern Europe after the Enlightenment with its interest in this part of the continent as part of its project of universal Progress. The type of knowledge produced about “Eastern Europe” by the most influential writers of the Enlightenment, writers such as Voltaire, influenced the selection of historical narratives that formed the basis of national ideologies and the state-building projects of the region. Within the discourse of “Balkanism” and “Eastern Europe” complex realities and histories in the region were seen as homogeneous and unchanging entities fit to serve as explanations for economic, political events or inter-ethnic conflict.

Caution is needed to avoid falling into the trap of reiterating these discursive constructs as un-interrupted continuous processes. Stuart Hall’s notion of cultural identity takes both structural and processual factors into consideration and thereby suggests identity processes are continuously defined and redefined. Cognitive categories and intellectual traditions can, theoretically, always be subject to change and negotiation in the social sphere. Even though the discourses of “European-ness”, “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism” may have produced strong regional ideologies , this does not necessarily correspond to acceptance of discourses that have been translated into cultural and social practices.

In *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova attempts to “give voice” and agency to Balkan societies by identifying the many actors who have shaped the image of the “Balkans”. She concludes that “Balkanism” is not a mere sub-species of “Orientalism” or an “orientalist variation on a Balkan

41 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe,* 4.

theme" but a distinctive discourse with its own historicity. Todorova claims local responses to the West Europe-produced discourse of "European-ness" and "Civilization" suggest local actors have transformed or refused such self-designations and, moreover, they have produced their own categories of exclusion.[42] Todorova's insight consists in looking into the actual historical and political relations that the Balkans have interacted with meaningfully. By doing so she manages to avoid discursive relativism by simply assuming *a priori* that the only manner of engagement with Orientalist and Eurocentric discourse is acceptance.

Todorova argues that there are good reasons to view "Balkanism" as a similar phenomenon to "Orientalism", but there are also elements that indicate it should be treated as a distinct category of analysis. She argues that Eastern Europe and the Balkans are not subject to the same processes that characterize Said's concept of Orientalism.[43] Todorova's discourse of "Balkanism" as distinct from "Orientalism" is based on several considerations. Firstly, she argues that the "Balkans" have an attested historical and spatial concreteness. Secondly, she argues that the salience of the discourse and the extent to which it shaped knowledge of the self is limited to an elite circle, so the effects produced in the region are limited at best. Finally, Todorova argues that a derogatory definition of the "Balkans" is a discontinuous historical process and self-designation of the Balkans is not heavily influenced by a colonial terminology. Todorova's argument for differentiating between Orientalism and "Balkanism" are: 1) the fact that the Eastern European and Balkan spaces are concrete, identifiable entities, whereas the notion of "the Orient" is vague and deliberately intangible; 2) Orientalism works as a refuge from the ills of European modernism; 3) Eastern Europe and Balkanism are transitional concepts, something not quite non-European, and therefore by no means a definitive dichotomy; 4) self-perceptions of Eastern European and Balkan peoples are not articulated using a language that is influenced by colonialism, and one that bears the mark

42 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 7.
43 See Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans.*

and the logic of Orientalism and Otherness.

Todorova's argument that the Eastern European and Balkan spaces are concrete, identifiable entities is based on the existence of clear spatial dimensions and differentiation between a "West" and an "East". Also, she argues that the historical and geographic concreteness of the Balkans stands in contrast to the intangible nature of the Orient. She adds that the Balkans have developed their self-image based on an actual historical presence of an "Other", the Ottoman Empire. Todorova argues that the actual historical relationship between the West and East of Europe has not always been characterized by a pejorative opposition. She holds that, after the fall of Rome, Byzantium represented the "unrivaled center of the civilized European world for several centuries". Contrary to what a derogatory reading of "Balkanism" might indicate, Todorova argues that it was actually the Western part of the continent that was regarded as "synonymous with barbarity and crudeness" having fallen prey to the attacks of the Visigoths.[44] Moreover, the division of Europe into West and East is a relatively late eighteenth century philosophical invention that developed gradually and that stemmed from a "lagging behind" of Eastern European societies in economic terms. She argues that the moral and cultural categories grew out of a lack of satisfaction with economic progress in the region.

Additionally, Todorova argues that there is no internalization of the process of Otherness in the Balkans and no self-perceptions of a colonial heritage. She argues that while a political domination was a concrete existence in the region due to the presence of the Ottoman army and administration there was nevertheless, adds Todorova a "consciousness of a certain degree of autonomy".[45] "Unlike Orientalism which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, Balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity." Within the space of this ambiguous identity there is an element of

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44 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 10.
45 Todorova, 11.

autonomy and agency.[46]

Finally, Todorova argues that the use of the metaphor of “in-between-ness”[47] for eastern European spaces creates a complex reality in the Balkans that cannot be simply circumscribed to “Orientalism”. She holds that it is this difficulty in “fixing” the Balkans that makes it challenging to place it in an absolute category. Moreover, Todorova believes that although Balkanism evolved as “a reaction to the disappointment of the Western European classical expectations in the Balkans ... it was a disappointment within a paradigm that had already been set as separate from the oriental”[48].

Todorova's position is partially adopted, partially refuted by Milica Bakić-Hayden and Nataša Kovačević.[49] Coming from a different perspective to Todorova, Kovačević agrees that there is a need for a more advanced distinction in understanding the processes of Otherness at work in Eastern Europe. However, she views Todorova's un-compromising position as posing a great danger as there is a risk of obfuscating a long history of Western European attempts to produce a discursive dichotomy between an imaginary East and West.[50]

Unlike Todorova, Bakic-Hayden does not view the metaphors used by agents of the Enlightenment in Eastern Europe and the Balkans as benign signs of economic stagnation. She argues, they are “constitutive metaphors in the social-scientific language of influential philosophers and writers of the time such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau.”[51] Bakic-Hayden develops the concept of “nesting Orientalism” by adopting the dichotomy that lies at the heart of Said's “Orientalism”.

46 Todorova, 11.

47 There are many imaginary and real spaces alike in eastern, south-eastern Europe that are designated through the metaphor of “the bridge” or the syntagm of “in-between”. “In between” intends to denote a space between “Europe” and “Non-Europe”, not fully “European”. Many authors I mention in this thesis engage with this metaphor, among which Mamardashvili.

48 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.

49 See Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms’ and Kovačević, *Narrating Post/Communism. Colonial discourse and Europe's borderline civilization.*

50 Kovačević, *Narrating Post/Communism*, 2.

51 Bakic-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms,’ 917.

“Nesting Orientalism” is thus designed as a pattern of reproduction in which “Asia is more “East” or “other” than eastern Europe. She argues that this pattern of reproduction is what characterizes constructed hierarchies in the Balkans as:

> the phenomenon of “nesting Orientalism” is evident in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states in which the designation of “other” has been appropriated and manipulated by those who have themselves been designated as ‘other’ in orientalist discourse. Thus, while Europe as a whole has disparaged not only the orient “proper” but also the parts of Europe that were under oriental Ottoman rule, Yugoslavs who reside in areas that were formerly the Habsburg monarchy distinguish themselves from those in areas formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire, hence “improper”.[52]

Bakic-Hayden uses “nesting Orientalism” to argue that while the Balkans developed their own categories of opposition, this in itself does not invalidate the existence of “nesting Orientalism”. She argues that, only within this structure and orientalist context, can we understand the rhetoric of Balkanism. Bakic-Hayden's position is compelling as it indeed challenges Todorova's by inviting a more structural and relational view on the larger processes at hand. Bakic-Hayden suggests that despite Todorova’s emphasis on the element of agency there is nevertheless a process of essentialization at work. Bakic-Hayden argues that this type of rhetoric follows the familiar orientalist pattern of “unchanging truths” and “exhibits a curious mixture of culture and politics”.[53] So the question of how this discourse, and entire knowledge production, continue to shape self-designations and self-representations in eastern Europe remains unanswered.

Bakic-Hayden substantiates her thesis on “nesting Orientalisms” by drawing on the work of Larry Wolff and his thesis on the idea of “Inventing Eastern Europe”.[54] Wolff traces the intellectual tradition, manifestation and knowledge-production of the Enlightenment and how it contributed to the creation of an apparently atemporal, unchanging, homogeneous entity named “Eastern Europe”.

52 Bakic-Hayden, 922.
53 Bakic-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms,’ 929.
54 See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*

He argues that this process did not exist since time immemorial because the invention of "Eastern Europe" has an identifiable history (a conception connected to Eric Hobsbawn's concept of "invented tradition") "as a work of cultural creation, of intellectual artifice, of ideological self-interest and self-promotion".[55] By focusing his analysis of the writings of agents of the Enlightenment – diplomats, ambassadors and travellers to Eastern Europe – Wolff's thesis reveals how their pre-conceived ideas combined Orientalist and colonial themes with the reality they "observed" in Europe's periphery.[56]

The terminology used by the writers Wolff cites in the invention of "Eastern Europe" (ex. Voltaire, but others as well) to describe this fabricated space and its inhabitants includes examples of exoticism, primitivism, tribalism, backwardness. Wolff concludes that:

> it was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of the Enlightenment. It was also the Enlightenment, with its intellectual centers in western Europe, that cultivated and appropriated to itself the new notion of "civilization"… a civilization discovered its complement, within the same continent, in shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism. Such was the invention of Eastern Europe.[57]

Wolff further argues that the idea of a homogeneous space and unit of analysis called "Eastern Europe" gained great potency in the ideological frameworks of the Cold War. Such cognitive categories also outlived the communist regimes in Europe and continue to survive in public culture and its mental maps. Wolff identified several techniques that indicated the manner in which Enlightenment writers and travellers' perspectives were used to present their Eastern European exploits "scientifically". This was carried out by creating categories of opposition and adjacency: "European" as opposed to "non-European", "civilized" in opposition to "uncivilized" or "more" or "less" "civilized". The philosophers, writers, diplomats and privileged travellers of the

55 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.
56 See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe.*
57 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe,* 4.

Enlightenment integrated their experience of newly encountered lands and peoples into a relational frame of similarities and oppositions. Within this operation diversified and nuanced historical, linguistic, ethnic, religious and culturally different groups were all meshed into categories that the "discoverer" could comprehend. Thus the entire Eastern European area became, in the mind of the writers of the Enlightenment whose writings Wolff engages with, a homogenous group of primitive, Slavic-speaking people with no valuable traditions, compromised by the negative cultural inheritance of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. There are several conceptual and analytic considerations within Wolff's analysis that concerns the Orientalist debate between Todorova and Bakic-Hayden.

First of all, the terminology in the examples that Wolff sources undoubtedly signal an adoption of the terminology of Orientalism and Colonialism. For instance, vocabulary that denotes exotica, fantasy, primitive, tribal, backward, underdeveloped in need of discovery (the West European civilization that needs to cast its gaze upon a space in order for that space to gain subjectivity and existence) and so on. The use of this vocabulary is consistent with an entity designed in the imagination as Europe's Other.

Secondly, the political context in which the discourse of the Enlightenment emerged – continental European empires in expansion – indicates a political agenda aimed at producing and casting "Eastern Europe" as a necessary tool. The examples Wolff offers in his work seem made to legitimize, justify and consolidate the Enlightenment project in metropolitan contexts, and to implement its model of progress in the region. The description and use of "semi-Oriental" and "semi-European" denote a tension in attributing an essence to the identity of the newly "met" people and lands of Eastern Europe. Consequently, there is a space of ambiguity, transition and ambivalence here that Todorova identifies through the metaphor of the "bridge", a bridge between

Europe and Asia, between Europe and the Orient.

12 Uneasy self-identifications in the “real” eastern Europe

An overview of the dynamics between ideology and agency in eastern Europe is necessary to provide the distinct local responses to the discourses of “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”. The term “uneasy” will be used to describe the character of these processes. The term is not to be understood in a normative manner; rather, it is intended to describe the difficulty and tension with which writers from the region present their being in the world. This difficulty in identification is produced by the condition of inhabiting an ideologized space.

The writers’ tension emerges from a negotiation between the discourse of “Eastern Europe” and the desire to belong to an idealized “Europe” that is always identified as the “West”. Self-identification in eastern Europe takes place in a complex space due to the fact that traditional forms of identity markers such as nationality, ethnicity, a linguistic community, religion intersect with a series of political-administrative territories that either ceased to exist or overlap newly-formed national-states. As a consequence, the region has been the theatre for various imperial projects and practices. Territories in the region have been (re)drawn and claimed by different political continental empires throughout history. Practices of othering that accompanied these changes have produced responses to imposed ideologies ranging from acceptance to rejection. Often this set of responses occupies the grey zone between the two.

The process of negotiating this difficult belonging to a symbolic map of Europe required constant re-consideration of one's identity in a changing environment and produced split identities in the region. The efforts of various national projects to create ethnic national identifications or the

European Union project for a large “European” identification, have produced overlapping and split identities. These processes engendered a series of responses in the region that I discuss extensively in Chapter V. These responses range from self-internalization of Otherness, compensatory types of behaviour such as “nesting Orientalism” or various expressions of overcoming one's “East European” condition (the so-called 'east European inferiority complex”), to engagement with ambivalent identities such as split selves or “in-between peripherality”[58]

As a result, eastern European societies today display signs of split cultural consciousness: split between a condition of assigned marginality in relations of power and the desire to emulate an idealized “Europe”, neither fully “Western”, nor “Eastern”. The region finds itself in a constant tension between the impossibility of being accepted as centre or metropolis and a refusal to be relegated to the periphery. This has led to a schizophrenic identity that does not fit into any of the neatly conceived simplistic categories as its historical heritage refuses such simplifications.

A local response to the discourses of “European-ness”, “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism” is compensatory behaviour in the form of a quest or desire to seek nativist “authentic” sources of self-identification. This behaviour is marked by a desire to return to an idealized past or as emulation as a means to replicate and accept values of the western “European” hegemon. Due to the fact that the eastern European space faced a double hegemon, these desires are projected against the Western-derived discourses, not in relation to the Soviet influence. Examples of emulation are expressed in narratives of belonging constructed around imagined communities with a common culture, language, political culture and religious affiliation. Within these narratives, east Europeans claim a rapprochement with the “European project” via various identity markers and distance themselves from the eastern soviet hegemon through instances of vilification. These narratives produce a

58 Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Central European Culture*, 10.

complicated symbolic geography of belonging in east European societies that sometimes result in hybrid communities claiming a cultural heritage from both West and East.

Such processes of simultaneous acceptance and rejection of ideological discourses result in an understanding of the Self as Other. The desire to emulate a Western-inspired Self produces forms of identification in eastern Europe that can be described as incomplete or inferior. Within these acts of self-colonisation the system of knowledge that the ideological discourses propose is accepted and internalized to the extent that the native perceives the local culture as Otherness.

Additionally, the experience of decades of communist regimes in the region and the types of wide scale transformations crippled traditional forms of belonging and solidarity in society. Moreover, it weakened a general sense of trust and produced socially alienated individuals producing a second order colonization.[59] The experience of social control under various agents of the state and a general climate of distrust and encouragement to seek the enemy within have led to a distorted relationship between the public and the private. The state required public disciplined displays of ideological activism from the individual, active and renewed signs of loyalty towards the Party.The private space could therefore be reserved only for spiritual freedom. It was a space in which traditional forms of belonging, demonized by the official ideology, could be practiced albeit with extreme caution. Additionally, the use of ideologically-laden terms such as “peace”, “democracy”, “the collective” or “the people” and the use of standard slogans – the wooden-language of communist regimes – led to a systematic perversion of language that stripped these terms of meaning. Finally, the state pursued a process of dehumanizing the enemy in the minds of individuals, using a model not dissimilar to that employed by the Nationalist-Socialist Party in Germany.

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59 Şandru, *Worlds Apart?*, 63.

In a climate of constant pursuit of internal enemies these mechanisms effectively created fearful and distrustful individuals. For these individuals, the daily experience of embodying both types of behaviour produced, over a long period of time, a split consciousness and eroded the very notions of civic culture, association, solidarity or trust leading to a deficit of civic society that would take a long time to recover.

13 Historical determinism and fragility as modes of being in eastern Europe

The visible expressions of internalized Otherness in the Eastern European space go as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century in travel writings. In the interwar period, synchronicity theories created a sense of urgency for Eastern European societies to catch up with "European" culture.[60] Expressions of internalized Otherness can be easily found in the telling works of prominent east European intellectuals Milan Kundera, Czeslaw Milosz and Danilo Kiš.[61] Their explorations of tragedy and despair indicate a belief in historical and geographical determinism.

Costica Bradatan notes that these articulations of self-identification by east European writers suggest a preoccupation with a deterministic view of history.[62] The desire to emulate a western European model of culture and civilisation, within the constraints of unbalanced power relationship between an idealised "West" and an inferior "East", has produced an uncritical view of an ideal of "Europe". For instance, the Modernist discourse advocated Progress while the discourse on "Eastern Europe" consistently pointed out a "lack of" Progress. Many eastern Europe societies contain narratives of "self-explanation" regarding their historical condition. Some scholars go so far

60 For a critical literature on Eugen Lovinescu's theory of synchronicity see ed. Corina Pălășan, Cristian Vasile, *History of Communism in Europe vol.2 / 2011: Avatars of Intellectuals under Communism* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2011). For a transnational study on this issue see Bradatan*, Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe.*

61 See Costica Bradatan and Serguei A. Oushakine, *In Marx's Shadow: Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).

62 See Bradatan, *Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe.*

as to theorize a so-called "east European condition", a "metaphysical discomfort" or an inability to come to terms with a stable definition of the "east European Self".[63]

This manifestation of uneasy self-identifications in eastern Europe can be read as an attempt to distance oneself from a geographic location that is perceived as externally imposed or difficult to come to terms with. This impossible situation comes from the difficulty of reconciling an idealised "European" home with being – a value-laden – "Eastern European". As a means to resolve that dilemma intellectuals, including Romanian philosopher and essayist Emil Cioran, devised the strategy or response term dislocation or deracination. This is the case too for Czesław Miłosz who described the eastern European condition as being ‘‘burdened with a longing for a homeland other than the one assigned to them from birth.’’[64] In a more radical way Emil Cioran takes this position even further by referring to a desire for de-racination in which the individual refashions him/herself by renouncing membership to or association with a culture or a language that does not represent him/her. Within this desire to lose one's roots there is also an aspect of renunciation of the Self as a way out of an impossible east European condition.

Costica Bradatan suggests there is a character of perceived permanent misfortune and tragedy and even the expectation for disaster to strike in the eastern Europe space.[65] As such, the abnormal or peculiar is integrated into the normality of life and the individual is perceived as powerless in the face of historical and geographical forces. This integration of the abnormal becomes a vicious circle, a self-reinforcing narrative that relegates the cause for historical hardship and conflict to a deterministic condition of symbolic geography. It is interesting to note that within these narratives of geographical and historical determinism the space for individual agency becomes narrow.

63 Bradatan, *Philosophy,* 2.
64 Czeslaw Milosz, as cited by Bradatan, 'Introduction', 2.
65 See Bradatan, *Philosophy, Society and the Cunning of History in Eastern Europe*; Bradatan and Oushakine, *In Marx's Shadow*, 3.

Historical episodes, such as territorial war loss during WWI and WWII that ended in failure can always be relegated to this sort of narrative of inevitability and powerlessness. Moreover, it seems that the further a society is distanced from the imagined centre identified as “Europe”, the further that society is downgraded on a universal scale of meaning and development.

The idea that to inhabit the “East European” space is to inhabit a space that lacks stability and is subject to outside forces denotes a sense of fragility as a mode of existence. A manner of understanding events and phenomena through such a lens transfers a sense of fragility and non-endurance to other elements in society where any meaningful action is, *a priori,* stripped of power. As a consequence, institutions, ideas, projects for the future lose the potential to be realized. Scholars working on building democratic structures and practices relying on generalized trust and civil society in eastern Europe often run into such deterministic attitudes. The east European space is thus presented as a universe in which the only actions that make sense are improvisations and temporary solutions which indicate a precarious mode of existence.

14 Eastern Europe as “in-between-ness”. The Borderland as an east European manner of being in the world

The difficulty of inhabiting and finding one's place in eastern Europe triggered a distinctive response in the self-identification of Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili. In an attempt to present the condition of the “east European” he utilized the metaphor of the borderline or frontier to denote the space in which this condition is negotiated. According to Mamardashvili, the experience of inhabiting the borderland between civilizations, between Europe and Asia offers a unique vantage point and insight. For Mamardashvili, the impossible east European space does not resonate despair or a sense of tragedy; rather, it offers opportunities for creating distinctly new subjectivities

unavailable on either side of the frontier.

In offering an interpretation of Mamardashvili's vision, scholar Julia Sushytska theorizes borderlands as sites of resistance to imperialist agendas. In her understanding, the topos of eastern Europe is characterized by a condition of " in-between-ness", between the West and its Others:

> Eastern Europe is a lack of exhaustive knowledge. … the position of Eastern Europe is one that makes visible the finitude of our knowledge – something that the West has tended to forget throughout its long and eventful history. Eastern Europe is characterized by flexibility or suppleness. It has no definite form, although at the same time it is not entirely shapeless: it is a constant negotiation between several different forms that, eventually, takes us beyond any one of them or their (impossible) sum. In fact, Eastern Europe is the presence or the existence of the other inside the self: it is the presence of the non-West within the West, and vice versa. After all, it is most certainly not the West, and yet not its Other.[66]

Not being rooted in any fixed cultural tradition that impedes movement and restricts the creative process, even that of self-identification, the east European Self is free to fashion an entirely new identity. Moreover, since the east European condition is marked by dislocation, instability, fluidity it follows that the border, as a metaphoric image of inhabiting various spaces, offer limitless possibilities. Mamardashvili's theorization of "borderland" as a distinctive manner of being in the world and as a way out of the east European paradox of identification is based on an understanding of the borderland as a space of trespassing and transformation. The Self is thus created by this unique situation and simultaneously is free to fashion him/herself as a result of this interaction with several ways of being in the world. The borderland is thus a space of meeting, confrontation with the Other and of constant becoming as a result of that. In opposition to the idea of the establishment that produces subject-positions Mamardashvili celebrates the borderland as an ambiguous space.

Mamardashvili's theorization of this condition is certainly interesting in the sense that it offers an example of local agency. His vision of inhabiting the difficult east European space is in response to

66 Julia Sushytska, 'What Is Eastern Europe? A Philosophical Approach,' ed. Costica Bradatan, *Angelaki*. Routledge (2012), 45.

the difficulties of identification in that space. It is also a refreshing perspective that can be interpreted as an attempt to subvert the characteristics imposed by western-imposed discourses. In this sense, Mamardashvili tries to reverse the need to dogmatically fix the east European space and contain it in a fixed ideological construct by asserting and celebrating its supposed lack of stability. However, there is a trap. By trying to subvert the ideology Mamardashvili ends up utilizing and reinforcing the logic and problematic terminology of the very discourse. The "east European" space in his theorization is conceptualized as lacking and incomplete and characterized by a condition of instability. This automatically implies a notion of complete identity that "east European" is in a relation with or takes reference from. The proposed solution is a celebratory form that accepts elements of the discourse, and exoticises them as unique. Mamardashvili's concept of "borderland" does not have sufficient historic grounding and poses far greater problems than it seeks to resolve. In a way, such viewpoints exoticize the space of the borderland by its conceptualization as a space of endless possibility and in opposition to a rational fixed and stable "West".

Expressions of self-identification in eastern Europe are problematic because they occur within an externally imposed ideology and are scarred by it. Orientalism-inspired analyses in the region help in understanding mechanisms of Othering, but they also indicate a very distinctive type of response to ideologies of Western-ness. Eastern Europe is transitory, its "in-between-ness" is utilized to explain self-identifications in the region, and scholars theorize this condition in various ways. While some writers draw our attention to local responses that accept Eurocentric and Orientalizing discourses under the forms of internalization of Otherness, others celebrate the frontier as a unique form of identification. Eastern Europeans various cultural traditions, inter-related histories with western European societies, common religion or language continuously undermined attempts at their discursive containment. Moreover, as Todorova observes, the Balkans and eastern Europe could not easily be classified, explored, or conquered as the imagined Orient Cristina Şandru terms

this a case of paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion that served its purpose to stand in contrast to the idealized notions of western civilization in a space of “civilisational limbo”.[67]

67 Şandru, *Worlds Apart?*, 37.

Chapter IV The Cultural Field in Socialist Yugoslavia and Romania. Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić's Positioning as Intellectuals

The previous chapter provided a discussion of how the notion of "European-ness" promulgated through discourses, discursive techniques and institutions, contributed to an ideological and problematic understanding of Europe as a homogeneous identity. "European-ness" represented, in the collective imagination, the physical incarnation of an ideal of culture and modernity. This chapter explains "European-ness" as an ideological concept in the formation of an imagined Europe by discussing the life writing and contribution to intellectual debate of Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić within the culturally specific contexts of Yugoslavia and Romania.

This chapter provides details of the cultural and political environment in which Liiceanu and Drakulić shaped their intellectual ideas and in turn were themselves shaped. The chapter begins with a brief explanation of the role of the "intellectual" in my analysis with the provision that this is not the focus of my investigation *per se*.

The literature that deals with the study of intellectuals and their role in societies focuses on the functional aspect of intellectual activity to define the role of the intellectual in society.[1] Such studies treat the conceptual category of "intellectual" as self-evident. The "intellectual" discussed exclusively from the perspective of utility and activity. "The intellectual" is often defined in relation to power, and therefore whether they support or challenge a political regime, whether they are influential in shaping public opinion and whether they uphold certain values and norms. Literature

1 Treaties on intellectuals as an object of analysis must invariably refer to the main two approaches in Intellectual Theory: one is Julien Benda's theoretical approach in *La Trahison des Clercs* (Paris: Collection Les Cahiers Rouges, Edition Grasset, 2003) translated in English as either [*The Treason of the Intellectuals* or *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*] and to the other main approach, Antonio Gramsci's differentiation between traditional and organic intellectuals in his series of treaties *Prison Notebooks* (in original Italian *I Quaderni del carcere* (Torino: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi. Le Opere Vol. IV.II, Einaudi, 1996).

about the intellectual may be deceitful as it tends to reiterate the certainty that its own object and conceptual category – the intellectual – lends itself to an unbiased analysis.[2]

According to Zygmunt Bauman intellectuals are temporary occupants of a space of legitimation with claims to expert knowledge. The intellectual creates the intellectual through contributions to public debate thereby legitimizing their own specialized claim to knowledge and truth. Intellectuals are not politically neutral. They have a relationship to knowledge and truth, exemplified by providing knowledge and opinion to the masses. Intellectuals, regarded as experts, have social status and power.[3] Intellectuals' self-definition is inherently an act of reinforcement and self-legitimation in an attempt to establish a theory about intellectuals[4]. What is required, according to Bourdieu, is an investigation into the nature and role of intellectuals in society, the resources they utilize in their work and their possession of a specific form of capital that conditions their social status. I investigate "intellectuals" as a category of people who enjoy social prestige and as experts in their field of knowledge to understand their views and role in reconceptualising post socialist European societies.

Bourdieu argues that the symbolic capital intellectuals hold determines the likelihood of their ideas being recognized and accepted in their respective fields. Symbolic capital facilitates intellectuals asserting their cultural values over the values of those with competing ideas. The effect of this continuous process is acceptance and legitimization of certain visions of society. While Bourdieu's thesis has validity in French society it has limited applicability to other cases. The role of

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2 Most theories on intellectuals build on Benda and Gramsci's seminal works, preferring to focus on the structural perspective, either a class or a groups-interest in their analysis. For reference, see Alvin W. Gouldner's concept of intellectuals as a flawed universal class in 'Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals,' *Télos,* 26 (1975): 3–36 or Karl Mannheim's concept of free floating intelligentsia in *Ideology and Utopia,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).

3 Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press; Oxford: In association with B. Blackwell, 1987), 8-9.

4 See Jerome Karabel, 'Towards a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics', *Theory and Society* 25, 2 (Apr., 1996), 205–33.

intellectuals is limited in socialist societies in eastern Europe where cultural values are not well defined. Intellectuals in east European societies were engaged in a competition over what constitutes cultural values from the nineteenth century all the way to the postsocialist period.[5] Since Bourdieu's conceptual frame is limited to explaining a stable environment it cannot be uncritically transposed to the cultural, political and economic particularities of socialist eastern European societies. For this reason, the application of Bourdieu's work will be limited to an explanation of the manner in which intellectuals in a socialist society alter a cultural field.

As explained in the Introduction, I consider intellectuals as social agents who position themselves in the cultural field via specialized discourses. I argue that intellectuals enjoy a privileged role in society as they constitute themselves, through their own legitimizing strategies, as experts in conveying the truth about the social world. This reading is based on the assumption that any activity within the sphere of culture is inextricably related to power. Intellectual activity is always situated in a specific context. This is because producers of culture have an interest and attachment to some values over others as there is no neutral zone from which agents act and through which their ideas are manifested in culture. Cultural producers are social agents who operate, consciously or not, within a political sphere; they belong to interest groups, networks and, ultimately, are part of a larger society that can accommodate or hinder their values. An analysis of the cultural field in which intellectuals operate as participant agents can make their roles in society transparent.

By examining the cultural field, we can understand how intellectuals position themselves and are positioned by others. Situating intellectual activity as either a quest for truth or a quest for power runs the risk of being simplistic or cynical as it is not evident that a quest for power lies at the heart of an intellectual's commitment. While intellectuals are genuinely attached to certain values and are

5 For a general idea on the specific context of theoretizations on intellectuals in east European socialist societies see Tismaneanu, 'Truth, Trust, and Tolerance Intellectuals in Post-Communist Society,' *Problems of Post-Communism*, 43, 2 (1996): 3-12.

loyal to certain standards of scholarly work, the quest for truth and the quest for power are not and cannot be on opposite ends of a spectrum. Intellectual activity is inherently political because as agents in the cultural field intellectuals propose and promote ideas and values that change the social world.

1 Characteristics and specificity of intellectual activity and the cultural field in socialist societies

The discussion now turns to the landscape in which culture and cultural activity were carried out by writers and intellectuals in socialist societies in Europe. It is important, at this juncture, to offer a brief overview of the features of a politicized culture. I do this to expose how the outcomes of policies and the objectives of socialist regimes produce a distinctive cultural field. Thus an analysis of the production of culture in a socialist regime needs to take into account several aspects: the ways in which the political ideology affected the cultural environment as well as the elements that defined the relationship between the newly-established socialist regimes and intellectuals. These aspects have implications for the ways in which disciplines were prioritised or were simply made more compatible with the new communist ideology. The interests and needs of both the regime and intellectuals constituted a relationship both tangled and conflictual, a precarious balance between advancing one party's objectives and maintaining the actual relationship that was sometimes at odds with the objectives.

While, on the one hand, socialist regimes needed traditional social authorities to legitimize them and validate social, political, economic changes, intellectuals, on the other hand, needed institutional resources to advance both their values and disciplines. Both groups had an investment in this relationship. Socialist regimes sought to create a cultural intelligentsia after their own image. They needed intellectuals to disseminate Stahanovist ideas, ethics, work, principles of "socialist

equity and ethics", and notions of progress and modernity. This required compliance and performance from intellectuals aimed exclusively towards regime-predicated values. For some intellectuals, especially the so-called "Europeanists", this situation meant a continuous struggle to reconquer a space for the production of, as they called them, genuine cultural values and to create counter-institutions that would protect those values from assault by the Party. Other intellectuals, keener to appease and comply, saw in the new order as an opportunity to advance their values, as they could now use the new regimes to attain political influence and institutional resources. Importantly, intellectuals were not a homogeneous group within socialist societies in Europe. Due to conflicting ideas, values and creeds, many of them belonged or were associated with different groups. For instance, intellectuals whose positions were marginal prior to the establishment of the communist regime could use the new institutions to advance their ideas and values. Among these intellectuals, nationalists were especially advantaged during the so-called normalization or consolidation periods.

Since culture and all activities within the field of culture are situated and produced, intellectuals are agents within a field. This is not to say or presume that socialist authoritative regimes were not complex landscapes which required skilful navigation or that all agents had equal power and voice. The actions of agents were highly dynamic and, often times, intricate. This means that strategies of coping required creativity and risk-taking.

This thesis considers intellectuals' strategies to maintain their roles as producers of knowledge not by regarding their decision-making processes and strategies as unmitigated quests for power, rather by considering agency without prior moral considerations in mind. One has to move beyond the narrative of victimhood often ascribed to intellectuals from socialist societies to see how they participated in the processes of accommodation and resistance. Intellectuals' leverage and agency

within socialist regimes is a sensitive subject. Some studies suggest intellectuals could not participate in any negotiation with political authorities since the state apparatus and the cultural field were completely centralised and under the control of the state. However, other analyses suggest that despite the imbalance in power relationships, intellectuals were indeed participants in a pact with power, participating as they did through trade-offs by offering consent and obedience in exchange for resources. To have values and seek one's interest can simply mean to be committed to certain ideas deemed as worthwhile or a commitment to the notion of truth. Obviously, different intellectual groups have different understandings of value, moral and aesthetic. Consequently, different groups negotiated differently with power.

The relationship between intellectuals and power was oftentimes difficult and ambiguous. Intellectuals and political authorities needed each other's compliance, while at the same time distrusting each other. Intellectuals are a social group of individuals who use their specialized knowledge to guide public opinion and values. Equally, the strategy can misfire for the same reasons. Consequently, a conflict can emerge between those who establish the official truth and those who uphold or contest it.

In socialist Eastern Europe, the cultural sphere was a site of negotiation for the needs and interests of both socialist government, the Party, and various intellectual groups. Cultural production operated within an ideologized society, and the resources on which it depended were highly centralized. Institutions that managed cultural production were allocated resources for large projects that conformed and promoted Party doctrine in all arts. Scarcity of funds caused conflicts between intellectuals as they faced new challenges. Some disciplines, by their very nature, tend to be advantaged and thus secure funds. For instance, as history is central to the legitimization of the communist parties, re-arranging the discipline's focus was a priority and was therefore funded.

After the Second World war newly-established communist regimes in Europe enacted society-wide re-organizations and transformations as part of their efforts to establish themselves as legitimate regimes. This resulted in institutions and structures deemed as "bourgeois" and "counter-revolutionary" being abolished and new socialist structures and institutions introduced. Supposedly, the new order reflected the working class. A large proportion of professional elites were deemed to belong to the "unhealthy" social classes: the aristocracy, elitist cosmopolitans, bourgeois, liberals and land-owners or as they were called by the socialist authorities, kulaks.[6] The new regimes aimed to dismantle the old order, but without the necessary human resources to actually accomplish the task at hand. Communist parties established Party-led training and educational programs to train the required professionals for the new institutional structures. This created inefficient structures in an already difficult economic situation and, more importantly, it produced a larger intellectual workforce than the system could absorb.

Intellectuals with a vested interest in joining the new official structures, entered into a pact of ideological compliance. Those who were either perceived as inadequate, due to their "unhealthy" social origin[7] or simply refused to comply were excluded and had to find other strategies to advance their specialized knowledge. It is these intellectuals and their strategies that is of interest here. What strategies did these marginalized intellectuals utilize in a centralized and ideological system to advance their interests and build their careers? Sometimes they turned to other types of authorities to attest to their value and specialized knowledge. These intellectuals entered into the field of politics and challenged the official structures by contesting their competency to judge cultural

6 Kulaks or кула́к in Russian is the term used to describe peasants with over 8 acres of land towards the end of the Russian Empire.

7 "Unhealthy" social origin was an official ideologically-derived term in Marxist-Leninist societies. The term, used in social organisation, job allowance, entrance into universities, allocation of state resources and so on was an ideological term used in official documents, language, speech in order to legitimize state policy and actions against its own citizens. The so-called "unhealthy" were individuals whose family either had a private business, owned land or were in any way connected to social groups that could present a real or imagined danger to the socialist order.

value. Not being able to count on official resources, these intellectuals sought to influence and achieve cultural power in a larger cultural arena and with another audience. Some became dissidents as a result of this conflict, or for other reasons. Verdery, in her work on identity and cultural politics, argues that socialist regimes' mode of control followed a binary logic that viewed any attempt by marginalized producers of culture to participate in the cultural sphere as dissent. In this politicized cultural sphere, any invocation of "Western" or "European" cultural values were regarded as elitism, a betrayal of the national effort to build socialism and, ultimately, read as dissidence. On this Verdery argues that:

> Because the logic of socialist systems is opposed to the rationality of western political economies; because such western-linked notions as "market" and "competence" are antithetical to the bureaucratic principles of allocative command and patronage; because any refusal to accept the Party's rules and values automatically looks, to westerners, like dissidence... for all these reasons, "the West" is a natural participant in cultural struggles. Within any contest among Eastern European intellectuals, a faction that is trying to improve a disadvantageous situation may end by rhetorically allying itself with the West, whether by choice or by default.[8]

This was a dilemma that socialist regimes had to address in order to strike the right balance. Socialist regimes had to allow sufficient freedom in the creation and production of culture, while ensuring that they protected the newly-established institutional structures and prevented them being challenged or subverted by contending intellectuals. The challenge for producers of culture was either to use their specialization to join the ranks of power and build careers or to build their own parallel structures of cultural production by seeking alternative authorities and audiences.

2 The cultural field in the Romanian and the Yugoslav society during communism

Perhaps one of the most striking differences between the Romanian and the Yugoslav cultural field lies in the immediate postwar situation. The communist regime in Romania was established through

8 Verdery, *National Ideology*, 96.

a multi-stage process of transformation. The first phase consisted in destroying all traces of the existing cultural institutions and substituting the expelled specialists with its own Party-backed intelligentsia. The Yugoslav communist regime established structures for education, research and cultural production. When the communists came to power after the war they faced an extremely modest academic infrastructure.[9] Both societies had similar high rates of illiteracy with an urban-rural divide. The plurality of political parties during the interwar period reflected the fragmented and competitive features of Romanian society. The cultural field also was fractured and conflicted as various cultural movements and groups competed for audiences, visibility, resources and symbolic capital in the public sphere.[10] The Romanian Communist Party was Moscow-backed in the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s and native support for communism was almost non-existent. In the late 1960s after the collapse of the communist regime Romania turned away from Moscow and towards nationalism. This caused internal struggles for power within the Party, and a re-arrangement of the cultural field with alternating periods of political relaxation and dogmatism. At the end of the 1960s the new Party leadership strove to gain stability by building economic and diplomatic alliances with Western capitalist powers.

On the other side, the Yugoslav Communist Party had extensive internal popular support at the end of the Second World War. This was mainly due to the credibility of the newly-instated regime as partisans who fought against the fascist forces in WWII. Therefore the partisan heroes enjoyed popular support and conferred legitimacy on the new socialist regime. This enabled popular support and legitimization for social transformations that the new regime set in place. Yugoslav nomenclature represented its socialism as an alternative path within the socialist "camp". The Yugoslav Socialist Party chose a Non-Alignment position after its expulsion from the "communist brotherhood" at the end of the 1940s. It constructed a socialist society based on the principles of

9 See Sinisa Maleševic, 'From 'Organic' Legislators to 'Organicistic' Interpreters: Intellectuals in Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav States,' *Government and Opposition*, 37, 1 (01/2002): 55–75.

10 Macrea-Toma, *Privilighentsia.*

workers' self-management and a more liberal economy. This stood in contrast to the planned economies of other east European socialist countries that did not enjoy such a degree of liberalisation. Although centralized in its organization, Yugoslav socialism included a workers' self-management style of governance and a more relaxed attitude to foreign trade and exchanges with "capitalist" societies than Moscow. When Yugoslavia gained its independence from Moscow the act of separation put pressure on the Yugoslav Party to prove that its independent path to socialism was the right one. This put pressure on the Party to achieve positive economic reforms and performance. Having declared itself as "post-ideology" or even as "pure practice" beyond any ideology, the Yugoslav Communist Party included western features of modernity in cultural expression. Arts, science and culture played a very important role in a society-wide reorganisation process. Intellectuals and artists were forced to reflect the progress achieved by Yugoslavia's political reforms and policies in their own work. For instance, social critique through literature and the arts had to be directed towards the bourgeoisie or land owners for exploiting peasants and employees. In most cases, cultural products had to reflect the achievements of socialism. Science together with the Arts were to convey to the world that Yugoslavia was objective and modern. All socialist societies had their challenges and constraints, however the Yugoslavian cultural field was among the most, if not the most, relaxed in terms of freedom of expression. The majority of Yugoslav intellectuals were committed to their mission as the majority of them were created by the Party. Other intellectual groups enjoyed relative freedom of expression until the economic and social reforms of the 1960s. Having had no traditional class of intellectuals prior to the communist regime the state intelligentsia was the most numerous and therefore had a vested interest in being loyal to the regime. In stark contrast to this class's interest stood other intellectual groups in Yugoslavia, including the left-wing Marxist Praxis group and the ethno-nationalists. Yugoslavia was not merely an agglomeration of constituent national cultures. Some scholars argue that, despite identification with various ethnic

and cultural groups, there was a distinctly "Yugoslav" common culture and identification with a shared cultural layer.[11]

3 Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić as intellectuals

I now turn to Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić to provide a general idea of the space in which they developed their intellectual strategies, the kind of voice they employ to gain credibility for the ideas they advance, how they relate to their societies, cultural milieu, and the centrality or distance they have vis-à-vis the institutional apparatus. I use Bourdieu's idea of cultural field to understand who these writers are and what, in their context, determines their intellectual strategies. In this section, I explain why Liiceanu's critique of de-professionalization in the cultural field in Romania during and after communism is relevant. I also explain why Drakulić's insistence on collective responsibility and individual voice is relevant in a post-Yugoslavia nationalist Croatia.

From a cultural capital perspective Gabriel Liiceanu was a marginal figure in the '70s cultural milieu in Romania, working as a researcher at the Philosophy Institute in Bucharest. Like many of his fellow Romanian intellectuals, writers and researchers working in the Humanities, he was sacked from his modest position for consistently refusing to join the Communist Party. He was forcibly re-assigned to a research position in the Institute of Plastic Arts which was unrelated to his expertise. This was a Party technique to ensure that those intellectuals who wanted to build careers would compromise with the Party and those who did not would not have the opportunity to build networks of solidarity. Liiceanu was propelled into the written cultural environment in Romania through the publication of "Jurnalul de la Păltiniş"[12] and "Epistolar" in the '80s. The two

11 Zoran Milutinović, 'What Common Yugoslav Culture Was, and How Everybody Benefited from It', in *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land* ed. Radmila Gorup (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

12 English translation *Păltiniş Diary.*

publications incited heated debates in the Romanian cultural scene. The two books dealt with issues that were only debated informally or were semi-censored at the time. The books questioned what constituted value in the cultural field in Romania, how value – understood as expert knowledge – was used as a criterion of differentiation, what institutions and experts were best equipped to evaluate a work of value and what cultural projects transcended the oppressive state dogmas.

In these works, Liiceanu decried the scarcity and availability of comprehensive philosophical resources in Romania at the time and the general lack of quality cultural products.[13] Liiceanu's written debut caused strong reactions and even today there are debates about whether his books are to be viewed as literature or acts of dissidence. The books do not engage explicitly with Marxist-Leninist ideology, nor do they criticize national state policies; they addressed more abstract matters. Through these books Liiceanu brought to public attention, in an unprecedented manner, the politics of culture, by exposing official modes of cultural transmission and proposing alternative cultural institutions, channels and practices. His plea for philosophy to have a higher status might seem benign stripped of its original context, but at the time, his plea was an attempt to recuperate and offer an alternative interpretation of philosophy from the dogmas of Marxist-Leninism. By referring to non state-sanctioned philosophical traditions, Liiceanu was indeed making a political statement. He claimed a continuity of philosophical traditions in Europe and demanded the insertion of a specifically Romanian body of philosophical works into this tradition. This was more than an attempt to impose one's discipline within a cultural field. This claim challenged the authority, legitimacy and the right of the Romanian intelligentsia to dictate what was acceptable and what was not in academic writing.

13 As a philosopher in a Marxist-Leninist society a specialist did not have access to all philosophical works, only the accepted/unproblematic sources. A large section of philosophy was thus untouchable for many experts.

At the time, Liiceanu was a member of the “Noica School” or the “Noicans”, a group of philosophers, writers and Humanities researchers with affinities to Philosophy. They frequented an informal training program set in place by the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica. Like Noica himself, people that frequented these meetings were on the margins of the Romanian cultural field, outside of Party-backed, centralized cultural production. For the Noicans marginality was both environment-induced, and embraced by intellectuals themselves at some point. As state-funded philosophical endeavours were carried out under Marxist-Leninist dogmas, the Noicans, Liiceanu included, chose to follow an alternative means of building a career. They built a site of cultural production in which culture was regarded as a means of fulfilling one's destiny, a destiny beyond the realms of politics, where the individual was more than a part in the collective will of the socialist people.

Noicans perceived the new intelligentsia working in state cultural institutions as detrimental to the Romanian cultural field and, like many non-Noicans, sought other cultural models to emulate and build on. The policies set in place by the regime had ensured that entire generations of Party-preferred intelligentsia decreased the quality and standards of scientific research. Liiceanu decried the imposture and incompetence that were now common features in the cultural field and proposed cultivating professional competence.

The Noicans, including Liiceanu, proposed a solution outside of the system. They avoided the compromises and opportunism that were features of the politicized Romanian cultural field by taking a detour. This had multiple implications. For one, it meant that cultural models had to be sought outside of the system. They found such a model in the living figure of Noica and in the pre-communist Romanian cultural tradition. As a consequence, their models and their audience transcended national borders. The cultural horizon that their work sought inspiration from was

German, Greek Antiquity and the European tradition, models that refused the national-socialist frame that the Romanian version of socialism proposed. This automatically rendered them dissidents, albeit marginal and non-threatening ones since they did not directly challenge the regime on clear political grounds. Secondly, they purposely targeted a large audience. Although the language of philosophy was not easily accessible the manner in which the Noica School members articulated their vision and the language they used to convey their message rendered it more accessible than expected. Their strategy which consisted in inviting a larger community and audience of connoisseurs of philosophy denoted an inclusive approach. What this meant in that particular context was that interested individuals could become part of an informal network which, in itself, was an event out of the ordinary. Moreover, their stress on expert knowledge outside of the official state apparatus meant that previously banned or maginalised intellectuals could reconnect with a community of scholars. This approach, in a way, overturned their condition of official marginality. The concerns and questions that the group were engaged with were of concern for other individuals and groups in Romanian society who also sought to "fulfil their destiny through culture" and salvation. Liiceanu wrote:

> Noica sent us to the great texts and instruments of European culture... as wellsprings for a spirit that is not closed up in provincial frustrations and vanities. For our generation, he represents a guarantee of the spirit in its cultural variant, as a spiritual purification that must be maintained and propagated through ongoing access to the verified sources of this purification. Perhaps never before in Romania has culture achieved such a value as the instrument of salvation. This discreet and unspectacular liberation... was and still is the form in which certain great values of today's Romanian spirituality will survive.[14]

The idea of culture as spiritual salvation for the individual resonated well within a cultural milieu in which people were frustrated by petty rivalries and lack of perspective. It was not a radically new idea, so it sounded familiar to the Romanian audience. Themes that concerned the Noicans echoed the ideas that circulated widely during the interwar period regarding disillusionment with modernity

14 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Paltinis* (Bucharest: Cartea Româneasca, 1983), 232–37.

and the intellectual projects of national salvation offered as a “remedy” for failed modernity. In a society in which Marxist ideology was not a belief, but merely a ritualized social practice, at the end of the '70s the possibility of investing symbolically in something of substance touched a soft spot and promised a sense of purpose. Thirdly, their project carried implications for how the relation between culture and power was to be regarded. By stressing the urgency of their mission, the Noica group managed to carve out a space for themselves in the cultural field. They replaced the centrality of politics with culture. They declared that Marxist-Leninism and materialist dialectic is not the natural fulfilment of history's destiny, but merely a project among other projects and can therefore be challenged. The new relation between culture and power, together with the cultural accumulation they advocated through a more accessible philosophy were at odds with the regime.

The model this group of intellectuals proposed relied chiefly on non-Romanian “Western” values that measured competence with reference to expert specialized knowledge. What this meant was that the means of producing philosophical works relied entirely on traditional pre-regime sources of prestige and cultural capital. This group of intellectuals stood in contrast to those cultural agents with membership and nomenklatura in the Romanian Party. The Noicans declared that cultural success could be achieved outside of official state channels as there was a cultivated audience – albeit underground and non-official – composed of experts that could recognise value. This act had several meanings and implications. Firstly, it challenged the rules that organised the official cultural sphere. Secondly, it challenged the ascribed role of culture as subservient to politics claiming that culture itself was the organising principle of everything else. Thirdly, it enabled a number of cultural agents – writers, essayists, historians, philosophers – to reinsert themselves in a cultural tradition that was interrupted by the imposition of the socialist regime. Fourthly, it enabled cultural agents to produce and disseminate their works instead of opting for the so-called “drawer

literature".[15] This was an entirely different manner of conceptualizing culture than the socialist understanding in which culture was for serving the values of the Revolution. The group's intention to value and make use of this cultural corpus meant that individuals, with expert knowledge could attain expert status outside of the officially-sanctioned system. The new community of philosophy experts recognized and welcomed new members. Philosophy in Romania was placed in a genealogy of written works and was inscribed in a far wider context than that which the regime predicated within the narrow confines of official ideology. The Noicans' insistence on professional standards was a direct attack on the de-professionalization process that socialist society-wide transformations had produced in Romania. As a consequence, the group's members were targeted as potential threats to the Party and accused of importing and preferring "foreign" values against local Romanian sources of inspiration. By establishing new authorities, models, a corpus of knowledge as a means of conducting research and a community of experts in which cultural production could be assessed and recognized, the group's strategy to constitute cultural production outside of the system of centralized resources was deemed to be resistance.

The second writer I discuss in my project is Slavenka Drakulić, a Croatian essayist, novelist and freelance journalist in Europe and an active contributor of opinion pieces to major international media outlets. Drakulić's intellectual path and career may be considered non-typical for a communist regime intellectual. She built her journalism career during the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s with one of the main newspapers in Zagreb, the feminist critique-focused *Danas.* Writing for *Danas*, however, does not signal an ideological conditioning.

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15 So-called "drawer literature" consisted in cultural works produced during socialist regimes that could not be published and that writers kept secret as the content of the works could be deemed subversive. Michael Berry *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press 2008), 198.

Under communism, Yugoslav journalists, writers and intellectuals were state-employees, financially dependent on the state, thus forced to comply with the communist ideology of the Party. However, the reality of that status and experience is not simple or straightforward. How can this situation be interpreted? As part of the communist bloc, how did the Yugoslav party, for all its liberal stance, allow such a situation? If feminist critique is a product of capitalist societies or bourgeois thinking, as the communist ideology dictated, how can such a situation exist? Drakulić's association with and work within a feminist magazine in a communist authoritarian society is one instance of a paradoxical socialist east European situation. It may be a surprise to encounter a state-sponsored media outlet that permits free thinking and the propagation of feminist ideas in a totalitarian society. Yet this case is the quintessential situation of an east European intellectual under communism: a precarious and changing space between freedom and constraint. It must also be added that feminist critique in communist Yugoslavia was performed under the avatar of women's emancipation fiercely and proudly celebrated by communist regimes as a sign of their superiority in the world. This is but one instance out of the multitude of paradoxical situations and experiences that intellectuals faced in the communist bloc.

During the communist regimes, Drakulić was not part of the state intelligentsia, or the Praxis group (a Marxist philosophical movement) or the nationalist group of intellectuals. She is not associated with any of the main intellectual groups in Yugoslavia. In a manner quite different from other intellectuals coming from ex-socialist societies, Drakulić would not fashion herself as a dissident for the period before the collapse of Yugoslavia. What is interesting is that Drakulić gained prominence not during, but mostly after the fall of the regime. It was her association with other ex-Yugoslav intellectuals who decried similar issues (the permeating nationalism, the aggravating situation of a general trend and culture that cultivated collective forgetting and the increasing

difficulty for intellectuals to have a dissenting voice) that she emerged as a dissident. Ironically, the space for dissent and criticism grew narrower after the fall of communism.

Together with Simisa Labrovic, Sandra Vitajic, and others Drakulić addressed a need in the new societies to make room for difficult truths, to speak of the horror of the war in societies that wished to forget and induce amnesia and to propose collective responsibility for the past as the only way of moving forward and building new societies. Drakulić positions herself as a critical intellectual in opposition to the nationalist, Croatian political doctrine Franjo Tudjman implemented in the newly-established republic in the 1990s. Interestingly, she is one of a handful of intellectual voices coming from ex-socialist societies in Europe who chose to articulate a nuanced, complex and sometimes problematic image of the relationship between intellectuals and socialist regimes by reporting intellectuals' accommodation and resistance to socialist regimes. She highlights a nuanced, complex experience as an individual, a woman, a writer and an intellectual in a manner different from the totalizing, essentialist image of life under socialism. As such, Drakulić refuses to fashion and present herself as a dissident, although she is sometimes represented as one. This is an important aspect of her intellectual persona as her intellectual strategy is built not on dissidence to communist ideology, but in relation to the totalizing nationalistic discourse of Franjoism. Furthermore, her interest is in the amnesia and denial of genocide and the need to build civil society in Croatia. As a result, Drakulić destabilized the pivotal themes that mark the postcommunist intellectual landscape. These was the widely-shared question of whether one was considered a dissident based solely on the fact that intellectual activity is also geared at being a critical public voice for the communist past, and the postsocialist order. Drakulić does not engage in competing forms of intellectual dissidence. She chooses instead to focus on making citizens responsible by advocating the need to admit to the often-difficult truth of a reality of collaboration, compliance and accommodation with

the communist regime. Hers is a rather singular intellectual branding in the postcommunist landscape.

Through her works of fiction and autobiography Drakulić focuses attention on issues she believes are in danger of being erased from Croatian public memory. These are a balanced memory of everyday Yugoslav experiences, the trauma of war beyond limited nationalistic discourses, the particular experiences of women in communism and post-communist society as marginalized subjects. It is because Drakulić writes critically on each of these issues that she is excluded from groups that identify with only one of the issues. To Drakulić each of these issues was built on the negation of another issue. Unsurprisingly, Drakulić's critique was not easily tolerated as it was interpreted by Croatian nationalists, for instance, as a betrayal of "Croatian-ness" and historical negationism of the memory of war in the former Yugoslavia.[16]

Drakulić and fellow Croatian women writers were the focus of a famous witch hunt at the beginning of the 1990s, during the wars in former Yugoslavia. The witch hunt consisted of media vilification set up by the Croatian political elite with the support of significant factions of the media establishment. Together with Rada Iveković, Vesna Kesić, Jelena Lovrić and Dubravka Ugresić, Drakulić was the subject of an orchestrated campaign of denigration. This is evident in an article titled "Croatian Feminists Rape Croatia"[17]. The purpose of the article, in the highly nationalistic context of Croatia at the time and among a population suffering from war and mass killings, was to call out these intellectuals as traitors of the Croatian nation, discredit their status and silence them as credible public voices. Their supposed betrayal was their refusal to conform to what was expected at the time of a patriot and a Croatian intellectual, which was to serve the nation's interest instead of

16 This is properly referred to as "historical negationism" also called "denialism" which is a distortion of the historical record. It is often imprecisely or intentionally incorrectly referred to as historical revisionism, but that term also denotes a legitimate academic pursuit of re-interpretation of the historical record and questioning the accepted views. The term "negationism" (négationnisme) was first coined by the French historian Henry Rousso in his 1987 book The Vichy Syndrome which looked at the French popular memory of Vichy France and the French Resistance.

17 Letica Slaven. 'Croatia's Feminists Rape Croatia!' *Globus* 11 December 1992.

writing as responsible individuals. This circumstance placed Drakulić in an impossible position. What Drakulić refused, as did her peers, was to become part of the mass of silent Croats at a time when being a Croat included one's willingness to accept victimhood and deny one's own responsibility for war crimes. This is a central point in Drakulić's positioning and strategy as a critical intellectual. Drakulić takes the risk of being marginalized by speaking the truth both about the communist experience and one's responsibility to ask questions and demand the truth about genocide. Her experiences led Drakulić to fashion herself as a rhetorical voice calling for a civic society and claiming a space in the public sphere of a non-democratic society.

A critical point in Drakulić's public engagement relates to the interpretation of 1989 as the end of communism in east European societies. While 1989 is often perceived symbolically as the end of a system, the end of an ideology and utopia, the end of lack of freedom and oppression, for Drakulić the end of communism did not bring democracy or the right of free speech in Croatia. On the contrary, she is one of the few to argue that experiences in socialist societies were more heterogeneous and ambiguous than totalitarian narratives of the Cold War would have us believe. She highlights the difficulties and injustices of socialist Yugoslavia, but also her own experience and the kind of freedom she had as a writer and intellectual. She points to the oppressiveness and ideologized reality of the postcommunist present as she is targeted with the label, "East European Balkan" intellectual, and fixed into the narrow confines of what that category wishes to produce which is a stereotype of the Cold War. The ordeal for Drakulić as an intellectual begins with the end of communism as she identifies neo-communist practices in the new so-called democratic institutions.

Drakulić is an atypical case of a dissident intellectual having had a relatively stable and privileged position during communism in Yugoslavia and having been transformed into a *persona non grata* in

the cultural milieu of nationalist Croatia. After the fall of Yugoslavia she positioned herself as a marginalized intellectual dissident, having been discredited and marginalized from media outlets in Croatia during Tudjman's authoritarian regime. By resisting discursively her incorporation into the body of the nation, Drakulić situates the need to affirm one's individuality and personhood at the center of her critical voice. To this end she writes:

> How does a person who is a product of a totalitarian society learn responsibility, individuality, initiative? By saying "No". But this begins with saying "I" thinking "I" and doing "I" – and in public as well as in private.[18]

This uncomfortable strategy places Drakulić as an outsider within the context of postcommunist Croatia, but she is careful not to have this position confused with that of exile as she is engaged and committed to uphold a critical dissident voice in Croatia and in building a platform for civic society. Drakulić is marginal judging from the limited institutional resources she can draw on and from the difficulties she encounters in Croatia. However, her intellectual strategy can be deemed successful as she has built a very specific brand of voicing dissonance that aligns her claims with those who voice similar ideas in postcommunist societies in Europe, and who too proclaim the idea that postwar and post-totalitarian historical truth can only be sought via personal and collective responsibility.

The particularities of Liiceanu and Drakulić's experience suggest that a traditional understanding of these intellectuals' centrality or marginality in the cultural field can position them as limited. From that perspective we would have problems understanding how a marginal character such as Liiceanu, in the apparatus of ideologized culture in communist Romania, could gain recognition in his field and gain the degree of prominence he did immediately after the fall of the regime. Liiceanu successfully turned his condition of marginality into a unique way out of the ideologized field of

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18 Slavenka Drakulić, 'Introduction. First person singular' in *Café Europa: Life After Communism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 3-4.

politicized culture in communist Romania. Likewise, merely by looking into the basic features that organise political life in Yugoslavia we would not understand how a writer could enjoy the freedom of expression that Drakulić did. It would be equally difficult to grasp the lack of freedom and dogmatic climate Drakulić had to navigate in a supposedly free democratic capitalist Croatia under Franjo Tudjman. Liiceanu and Drakulić's intellectual trajectories are not exceptional cases within the cultural field of communist and postcommunist societies in eastern Europe. They are closer to describing the majority rather than minority of experiences. The cultural fields of communist societies were anything but simple or unilaterally constructed. They were the result of external international circumstances that prompted socialist parties to either relax or strengthen internal dogmas and policies. They were the result of a dynamic negotiation process between the various intellectual groups themselves and the communist power, that needed to simultaneously accommodate and control intellectuals. It is in this field of paradoxes that the real experiences of these intellectuals can be found.

Chapter V Reading Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu: writing the self in eastern Europe

This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section is a discussion of the manner in which Drakulić and Liiceanu articulated subjectivities in the post-socialist eastern European space. I begin by explaining how the legacy of the Totalitarian paradigm has shaped a post-regime contemporary scholarly understanding of subjectivities in the region, proposing instead a new manner of understanding socialist subjectivities. I then discuss the particular phenomenon of dissimulation or "dedublare" in relation to the concept of "antipolitical privatism". "Dedublare" is a term coined by Gail Kligman to describe the process by which individuals split themselves to satisfy private and public demands on their lives in socialist societies. "Antipolitical privatism" is a concept proposed by Kenneth Jowitt to explain a similar process in socialist societies. Both of these concepts illustrate subject-positions, in particular the ways in which Drakulić and Liiceanu express or relate to the phenomenon of "split Self" or doubling the Self in their writing. The second section is dedicated to Drakulić and Liiceanu's use of life writing focusing on: the act of writing the Self; the use of multiple voices: and the problem of representation in their texts. The final section explains the role of symbolic geographies in Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts. Here, I discuss how writers position and understand themselves in a symbolic geography and how they articulate home(land) and belonging in "eastern Europe".

Slavenka Drakulić's (1949 —) oeuvre combines fiction, essays, semi-autobiographical writings, witness accounts, documentary journalism and fables (allegorical narrative). Her interest in cultural identity, belonging in the East-West divide and transnationalism is self-evident in her writings. For example, in "They Would Never Hurt a Fly" Drakulić discusses the manner in which war affects individuals, the relationship between the criminal and the victim, and the nature of guilt and

responsibility. In works such as “How We Survived Communism and even Laughed”, “The Balkan Express” and “Café Europa” she explores the legacy of the communist regime.

Gabriel Liiceanu's (1942 —) body of work initially consisted of philosophical essays and translations, many of them written in the late 1970s and 1908s but published after 1989. He produced collective volumes, essays, semi-autobiographical writing and what is termed in his local Romanian, “personal literature”. Liiceanu's narratives are often fragmentary and written in diary-style, features particularly evident in works such as “The Forbidden Door” and “The Păltiniş Diary”. His writing style prompts the reader to follow the narrator on a journey along which a sequence of unfolding events will reveal the author-narrator's as yet unknown fate. Liiceanu writes philosophical essays and volumes in German and Romanian for a specialised audience. He writes semi-autobiographical works in Romanian. His target audience is a national one. He largely writes for a carefully-cultivated and self-selected Romanian audience that can correctly decipher the cultural codes and riddles he alludes to in his texts. The aim of life writing for Liiceanu seems to be what Norman Manea describes as catharsis by anamnesis.[1]

1 Subjectivities

Any discussion of the recent past in eastern Europe must invariably address the legacy of the Totalitarian Paradigm in the region. In the 1990s the Totalitarian Paradigm was so successful in establishing a research canon that scholars must now make great efforts to overcome its legacy and ask new questions about old subjects. Though humanities scholars study the region by asking discipline specific questions they must all account for the Totalitarian Paradigm’s influence on

1 Anamnesis, the term that denotes a patient’s account of their medical history, is utilised by Norman Manea as a tool of empowerment. By using anamnesis as a practice Manea is working both to construct and be, simultaneously, against the devastating effects of memory. His practice of “anamnesis” represents both a “recollection” and “a history of an illness” in an attempt to re-appropriate the past.

contemporary scholarly work. Questions relating to the fall of communist regimes, the significance of 1989, late socialism, socialist economic organization, state-society relations all start from the premise that socialist systems in eastern Europe were essentially totalitarian in nature and practice.[2]

The Totalitarian paradigm to which I refer has changed from its inception in the 1950s. Hannah Arendt first theorized this paradigm, and its element of sustained terror, in her 1951 *Origins of Totalitarianism*.[3] Zbigniew K.Brzezinski and Car J.Friedrich have subsequently re-conceptualized the Totalitarian paradigm in *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*[4]. In the 1970s it came under heavy scrutiny and was altogether abandoned but in the last decades of socialism in eastern European samizdat and tamizdat circles it gained new currency. Scholars of Communism Studies have suggested that the paradigm had an after-life, as the term "totalitarian" was redefined in an attempt to understand better the nature of the socialist experience.[5] In this re-reading, in dissident circles the term "totalitarian" became the very definition of the power they were up against. Since the term "totalitarian" denoted a cohesive centre of power in full violation of human rights, its 'absolute' nature meant that it could not be the object of a legitimate dialogue.

An over-emphasis on the totalitarian features of socialist regimes can also, arguably, be considered a dissident strategy aimed at rendering socialist regimes illegitimate. It certainly makes sense to think of the dissidents' understanding of the regimes as totalitarian; a reaction to the dissidents' disappointment with the crushing of reformist Marxism. If those in power could not be reasoned with, then the very definition of power changed accordingly. This is precisely the argument Robert

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2 For a discussion on this subject see James Mark, Muriel Blaive, Adam Hudek, Anna Saunders and Stanisław Tyszka, '1989 After 1989 Remembering the End of State Socialism in East-Central Europe' in ed. Kopeček and Wciślik *Thinking through transition: Liberal democracy, authoritarian pasts, and intellectual history in east central europe after 1989*.

3 Arendt, H., *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, NY, 1951.

4 Zbigniew K.Brzezinski and Car J.Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,1956).

5 See Jacques Rupnik, "Le totalitarisme vu de l'Est," in Guy Hermet, ed., Totalitarismes, Paris: Economica, 1984; Achim Siegel, The Totalitarian Paradigm after the end of communism. Towards a Theoretical Reassessment, Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA 1998.

Brier puts forward.[6] He argues that in the last decades of the socialist regimes the term "totalitarianism" underwent a new shift in meaning as "Critical intellectuals from the Eastern Bloc itself consistently and almost universally called the governments they rebelled against 'totalitarian' in their writings; in other words, the concept reappeared in the political thought of the very people whose activities were seen by Western observers as demonstrating its limited value."[7] Within dissident political thought Brier offers the examples of Czech dissident Zdenek Mlynař and that of Polish dissident Adam Michnick. Brier argues that for dissidents such as Michnick the value of the term "totalitarian" lies not in its conceptual or analytic value, but in the validity of their personal experience in fighting oppressive socialist regimes. For dissidents such as Zdenek Mlynař and Adam Michnick "totalitarian" was the most adequate reading of the day to day reality and experience of communist regimes. In this sense, Brier argues that "the value of the concept of totalitarianism for dissident thought was not its descriptive precision but that it endowed the dissident's political project with a specific meaning and legitimacy". He suggest that these dissidents oftentimes understood and presented the political situation in antagonistic terms with the dissidents on the one side and the totalitarian socialist power on the other.[8] Political scientist Abbot Gleason notes the different understanding dissidents had with regard to the term. He writes that "the Poles and the Czechs developed the idea of totalitarianism in a far more practical and activist way than did the intellectuals of Western Europe and the United States."[9] Like Brier and Gleason, Barbara J. Falk also suggests that Michnick, along with many dissident theorists of East-Central Europe, shared the common "ability to reflect on and write about events in which he is a

6 See Brier, R., "Adam Michnik's Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left. A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought", East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures, 2011.
7 Brier, R., "Adam Michnik's Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left. A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought", p.198.
8 Brier, R., "Adam Michnik's Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left. A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought", pp.198-99.
9 Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.172.

participant."[10] Thus the understanding, use and definition of "totalitarian" was not an analytic contribution to political theory; rather it was an effort to "endow a lived reality with meaning."[11]

Changes, debates and transformations aside, the Totalitarian paradigm instilled a certain canon of interpreting and understanding the socialist experience.[12]The Totalitarian Paradigm starts from the *a priori* assumption, based on ideological grounds, that state power is absolute, oppressive and illegitimate and all individuals in a society are either victims or perpetrators of state violence. Individual and group interests, conflicts, situational alliances or simply spaces of ambiguity or contradiction elude this approach.[13] The Paradigm's research design is flawed and invariably leads to errors in analysis, interpretation and findings. The paradigm takes the effects of ideology in individuals' lives at face value and in doing so distinguishes only between so-called "false" and "authentic" subjectivities. Based on this assumption the paradigm views dissidents or opposition leaders as articulating so-called "authentic" subjectivities in tune with their true values and loyalties. The problem with this assumption is that it is interpreted within the discursive space of ideology. Consequently, those who take this viewpoint are limited to a binary state vs individual, in which the state regime exerts oppressive power upon the individual, who in turn responds by integrating or resisting oppression. This simplistic and confining binary, of resistance to or acceptance of oppression, is a reductive understanding of socialist societies. The silent assumption in this reductive distinction is that there is a "correct" analysis that is anticommunist. Articulations of subjectivity that are expressed in non-ideological terms be it on moral, political, religious, cultural or professional grounds are missing from such an analysis because the basic assumption is

10 Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest, Hungary: CEU Press, 2003), 177.

11 Brier, p.200.

12 Boican, A., *Rearticulating Socialist Subjectivities. Class and Gender in Romanian Fiction during Communism,* p.11.

13 The thesis recognizes the important contribution the Totalitarian Paradigm made in the disciplines of History, Political Science, Communism and Transition Studies. However, the argument is mad that there are many aspects of human experience that the paradigm cannot, due to its very nature, properly grasp. As the thesis, in part, offers alternative viewpoints for studying eastern Europe it is necessary to revisit the manner in which the Totalitarian paradigm considers articulations of subjectivity and individual experiences in the region, problematizes them and offers alternative points of view.

that any articulation of subjectivity is in relation to or a response to oppressive ideology. The opposition between individual and party/state is the only discursive space taken into account here.

This manner of conceptualizing subjectivities in communist contexts effectively screens out ambivalent subjectivities or other types of anticommunist opposition outside of the discursive realm of ideology. By focusing only on indoctrination versus resistance or Party versus the individual as one way-processes we fail to capture the range of human experiences that occurred beyond these two extremes. It is not reasonable to assume that the communist landscape was comprised of completely indoctrinated individuals on one side and dissidents on the other. Recent studies suggest a complicated landscape in which expressions of the Self, of individuality or simply everyday survival required individuals to devise a plethora of creative solutions.[14] I suggest that totalitarian regimes, such as the early socialist regimes immediately after the Second World War in Europe, did not impose themselves within a cultural or political vacuum. Rather they operated in a pre-existent discursive space that produced its own subject-positions. The rise of communist regimes with their own dogmas about all aspects of life was a dislocating process which required the articulation of a new order. Socialist ideologies and regimes offered a frame for individuals to navigate the new realities. This produced a variety of ways of understanding the Self and devising strategies to accommodate personal interests while obeying official ideology.

We know that people neither "perform" communist ideology nor simply resisted it. The range of options that individuals pursued to navigate complex situations is more complicated than that. And their motivations for doing so were multiple as individuals actively contributed to undermining Marxist-Leninist regimes over the course of time. As Verdery reminds readers, socialist regimes had to develop creative solutions to obtain legitimacy and power and, eventually, this was overridden by

14 For a general discussion see Frances Pine, 'Living in the Grey Zones: When ambiguity and uncertainty are the ordinary' in *Ethnographies of Grey Zones in Eastern Europe*, ed. Martin D. Frederiksen, Ida H.Knudsen, (London/ New York: Anthem Press, 2015), 25-40.

nationalist agendas that eroded the communist ideology from the bottom-up.[15] The solutions that communist regimes in Europe resorted to such as the so-called "Goulash-communism" in Hungary, the "Nationalist Turn" in Romania and Tito's reliance on the Paternal personality cult in Yugoslavia can be interpreted in this manner. Additionally, a socialist regime's urgent need to have loyal cadres, together with the individual's need for social mobility, produced institutional structures populated by untrained bureaucrats who never fully internalized the values of the Party or the regime's ideology. The intended communist subjectivity was a failure as the socialist project failed to eliminate old forms of attachment and belonging. Some scholars suggest that "the new socialist society and its corollary subjectivity, which was split into workers, technical specialists and the political cadre, never stabilized itself, and remained fragmented and conflicted."[16] Although suppressed by socialist regimes, religion, culture, peasant life philosophy, ethnicity, language, local traditions and especially the notion of the nation continued to play a central role in how individuals identified and understood themselves, and in the practices they cultivated in the private sphere.

It is here in a field where symbolic geography is highly relevant and subjectivities are constituted in the space between the two extremes of indoctrination and resistance that I place my analysis. To this end I discuss the manner in which Slavenka Drakulić's and Gabriel Liiceanu's writings reinforce, problematize, de-stabilize or subvert the established canons on notions of "Europe" or "European-ness" in the east European space[17]. By offering this reading of Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts I seek to reveal alternate narratives to those of the Totalitarian Paradigm. This invites recognizing subject-

15 See Verdery, *National Ideology*; ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Michael Geyer, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

16 Alexandru, D., E., Boican, *Rearticulating Socialist Subjectivities. Class and gender in Romanian fiction during communism* (Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2016), 30.

17 The texts which are read from Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu are life writing or semi autobiographical works. There is a difference in the manner in which one book from another was created, what techniques were used, narrative strategies and so on. For instance, *Păltiniş Diary* and *Ușa Interzisă* [Forbidden Door] are conceptualised as a personal diary. *Dragul meu turnător* is constructed as a letter to the ex Securitate surveillance agent, but it cannot be read as an actual letter. Drakulić 's *They would never hurt a fly: How we survived communism and even laughed*; *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of the War*; *Café Europa: Life After Communism* are all short stories within 4 life writing volumes brought together by a common theme. *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* is also a series of short stories conveyed as allegories.

positions other than the simplistic triad of victims-oppressors-accomplices, and instances of individual agency in a landscape of oppression and state violence.

For my reading of Liiceanu and Drakulić's texts I conceptualize subjectivities at the intersection between constraints and opportunities. In other words, I base my reading on the assumption that subject-positions are constituted by the presence of both imposed and ascribed forms of identification in a given context. Subject-positions are also formed through individuals, as social agents, striving to transform externally-imposed expectations to best suit their individual interests and expressions of selfhood. The imposition of Marxist-Leninist ideology resulted in calls for citizens to positively identify with the new regime, leading to some articulations of subjectivity being condoned and others sanctioned. The state included imposed appellations for social roles and models of behaviour the positive image of the New Man, "citizen" or "comrade", "heroine-Mother", "Pioneer" and "Hawk". These terms were used to describe, a Party-member, a collaborator in the never-ending search for "enemies of the People", "working people" as opposed to the supposed idle bourgeoisie and aristocracy, a member of a "collective" as opposed to the individual, and practices that result in homogenisation and self-censorship of individuality.

The second type, cultural rather than political domination, in the region is comprised of enduring notions of civilisation, Eurocentrism and national culture as they influenced the creation of subjectivities within its discursive space. Subjectivities are thus articulated based on belonging to the so-called "major" and "minor" national cultures. In the case of individuals in east European societies exposed to the discourses of "European-ness", inventing "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism", their subjectivities are constituted by defining one's belonging to so-called "minor" cultures.

1.1 Subjectivity and identification

I use the term ‘identification’ to define the individual’s negotiation and agency over their own understanding of Self in the social realm. This understanding of their Self is composed of structure and process. It offers a view of individuals as agents who continuously revise their identity within the constraints and opportunities available to them. At times, individuals do not function in the social world according to their desired identities. There are external elements – citizenship, nationality, physical appearance –imposed on people that influence the process of identification. People may accept, celebrate, reject or alter these elements. At other times, parts of the identification process can be a matter of choice, desire or will. Individuals, within contextual limits, devise strategies that help them better achieve their interests and seek a space in which their individuality can best be expressed. This sense of Self is in tune with the uniqueness of their experience. In other words, the Self is not a unitary or universally given entity; rather, it is articulated in terms of inter-relationships, between class, gender, race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and others within multiple discursive spaces.

Analysing articulations of subjectivity in eastern Europe that do not fit into the triad victims-perpetrators-heroes problematizes binary understandings of the relationship individual-power and avoids reiteration of these simplistic frameworks. We know via memorialistic literature, and archival research after the 1990s, revisionist and social history is rich and compelling.[18] These sources, which attest to a myriad of individual experiences under communism, have been previously omitted from scholarly analysis.[19]

18 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 256. For examples of memorialistic literature in other contexts see Olga I.Osipova, Olga A.Sysoeva, ‘Types of the comic in biographical and memorialistic literature of XX century’, *Modern Research of Social Problems,* 6, 38 (2014), 334–56; Fernando Arenas in ‘Cinematic and literary representations of Africans and Afro-descendants in contemporary Portugal: Conviviality and conflict on the margins’, *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos,* 24, (2012): 165–86.

19 Mark, Blaive, Hudek, Saunders and Tyszka, ‘1989 after 1989,’ 463–503.

I interpret the life stories of individuals in authoritarian, communist, dictatorial or totalitarian regimes as accounts of ordinary individuals who lived in extraordinary contexts. For instance, shedding light on the so-called “grey area”[20] in socialist societies has expanded our understanding of the notion of “by-standers”. In historical research this category was relatively ignored or set aside as “by standers” were presumed innocent. However, with increased research and a nuancing of the definition of the analytical category, “by standers” may now be re-visited. “By-standers” a category of people that profited from the policies of the state. In the case of the National-Socialist German state, “by-standers” profited by taking over the property and businesses of the Jewish community that were expropriated. In the case of socialist regimes in eastern European countries “by-standers” profited by accepting housing or work arrangements at the expense of victims of expropriation. As a result, the overall analytic category of “by-standers” was reconsidered because of the economic profit people within this category enjoyed as a result of nationalized property and confiscated businesses.

Similarly, the category “victim” was initially studied as an umbrella term for various types of experiences individuals had in their relation to the socialist state. This reductive understanding operated under the assumption that individuals were “agency-less” and did not negotiate in any manner with the authorities. This together with the post-regime climate of transitional justice and anxiety over large societal change led to competition for victimhood in the public sphere. During the first decade following the fall of the socialist regimes the image of the anticommunist hero was cultivated, sometimes turning victims of communist persecution into voluntary heroes of armed resistance and incarcerated ex fascists into saints.[21]

20 The term “grey area” is used in Communism Studies or contemporary European history in order to denote the majority of the population under socialism. The advancement of the “grey area” in research is an attempt to nuance and understand a wide range of experiences that fall between the two poles: dissidents and socialist establishment. For a critical reading of the “grey area” see Jiřina Šiklová, ‘The “Gray Zone” and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia’, in *East Europe: Where from, Where to?* ed. Arien Mack, spec. Issue of *Social Research*, 57,2 (Summer, 1990): 347–64.

21 See Radu Ioanid, ‘The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political religions,* 5, 3(December 2004): 419–53; Constantin Iordachi, ‘Charisma, Religion, and Ideology: Romania’s

1.2 Divided selves

The construction of a symbolic division between the private and the public realms is a defence mechanism, or a creative coping solution involving duplicity and complicity, that individuals rely on to reconcile the conflict between public or external requirements and private needs.[22] To play out the social persona the regime imposed and to participate in public rituals individuals sought a solution that would fulfil the state's requirements while satisfying private needs. Communist social control policies were generally met with obedience by citizens in exchange for a social contract that assured them security and livelihoods. This was achieved by simulating loyalty for all things public. The ritual of socialist allegiance was performed daily in the workplace, and in collectives and associations of professionals. Meanwhile, in the safety of home individuals maintained a space where pre-regime values were cultivated. As such, the traditional family was cultivated and new imposed forms of belonging were often rejected. Religious practices were observed despite the official socialist position that religion was archaic, anti-progress and against state policies. Native or foreign languages were used and disseminated despite the official decrees that doing so was a form of hostility towards their friendship with the Soviets. Foreign languages were regarded as a form of fraternising with capitalist Western societies. Local culture and traditions were maintained. Traditional gender roles were performed despite the discourse of women's emancipation that socialism presented via its propaganda channels.[23]

Interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael', in *Ideologies and National Identities: The case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. John Lampe, Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006); Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Monica Ciobanu, 'Remembering the Romanian Anti-Communist Armed Resistance: An Analysis of Local Lived Experience', *Eurostudia*, 10, 1, (2015): 105–23.

22 See Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

23 Maria Bucur-Deckard, *Citizenship, Gender, and the Everyday in Romania since 1945: Work and Care* (Seattle, WA: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2011).

“Antipolitical privatism” is a term coined by Kenneth Jowitt to explain how apparently obedient and compliant citizens who support their regimes could, in fact, cultivate a private disobedience that would eventually bring the entire Marxist-Leninist system down.[24] Jowitt’s work is useful for understanding this social strategy or coping mechanism. He explains that governments have created a system where state apparatus in eastern Europe produced and sustained an enduring and shared political culture that viewed the private and public realms in essentially antagonistic terms. The historical experience of occupation under various foreign rulers led to an understanding of the community as a besieged “fortress.” As in the past and in ghettos, the regime or official sphere the represented “trouble” because it was the locus of demands and sanctions rather than of political support and recognition.

For Jowitt “antipolitical privatism” involves citizens taking a dissimulative approach to the official or public sphere so that they conceal their private selves. Jowitt explains how individuals under socialism “Rather than [identifying] with regime values, norms, and goals, such as disciplined work … developed a set of postures that in many instances were antithetical to the regime's expectations.”[25] This strategy left a legacy of individuals envisioning themselves not as courageous or action-endowed social agents who could change the course of their lives, but as wise tacit by-standers who needed to survive. What resulted, in the end, is the absence of a shared public identity as citizens.[26] Importantly, while duplicity and complicity were essentially coping mechanisms that facilitated social relations they ultimately led to the destruction of the very organization the two helped sustain. As Kilgman explained:

> Duplicity involved willful, conscious behavior in which social actors are aware of their intentions. Herein enters complicity – often the social ally of duplicity … Complicity is more nuanced with respect to intentionality. Social actors may, out of fear, indifference,

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24 Kenneth Jowitt, ‘An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems’, *American Political Science Review,* 68 (1974), 1179.
25 Jowitt, ‘An Organizational Approach’, 1180.
26 Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 288.

> or alienation, actively or passively 'aid and abet' that in which they do not believe or with which they do not concur. Complicity and notably degree thereof, takes on special significance in a one-party police state in which public expressions of personal opinion is not countenanced". [27]

Antipolitical privatism and dissimulation constituted a unique set of societal responses that both supported and contributed to the destruction of the State project(s). This, in turn, informed individuals who created a repertoire of strategies for harmonizing otherwise conflicting interests. "Dedublare" worked in a space in which participants renounced the "recognition of the self as a legitimate, responsible actor in favour of the self as victim of the arbitrary will of others."[28] State-oppressed individuals, and individuals who manipulate "the system", contributed to its implosion.[29]

That individual's need to lead a double life is very much a part of the dissident oeuvre. In fact, it is the central idea in the work of Czeslaw Milosz in *The Captive Mind* where the idea of split subjectivity or "ketman" is posited as a resourceful strategy for ensuring survival, albeit by precarious means, of the self in difficult times when one's morality is put to the test.[30] Milosz uses the image of the actor on stage performing for his audience to describe the process of ketman. He explains that "after long acquaintance with his role, a man grows into it so closely that he can no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates."[31] Mislosz used this analogy to provide Western audiences with his interpretation of the climate in which intellectuals in authoritarian socialist societies lived out their inner lives. In doing so he wished to disparage the thesis that intellectuals in socialist tyrannic regimes, with widespread censorship and restrictions over intellectual freedom, did not engage or produce genuine ideas.

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27 Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*, 14.

28 Kligman, 15.

29 Kligman, 15.

30 The term "ketman" has a problematic genealogy as it was introduced in scholarly literature to a Western audience by Arthur de Gobineau. For a discussion on the adoption of the term "ketman" see Leonidas Donskis, *Power and Imagination: Studies in Politics and Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 140–6.

31 Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 55.

Milosz's ketman, a double life, offers an understanding of intellectual life that goes beyond the conditions that produce dissimulation of thought or double-think. One part of the self mimics compliance while the other part believes it leads a life of freedom albeit in the private realm of thought. This is a precarious game of equilibrium where indeed the ketman him/herself in the act of tricking might in turn be tricked. The web of lies and deceit does not ensure protection for the ketman. The ketman is not a safe subject-position and it is certainly not a solution to moral dilemmas. Levine and others describe it as "moral self-destruction".[32] Milosz has usefully described the inner turmoils, ambivalent nature and contradictory existence of ketman. He does not debate its morality or the ethics of escapism. In *The Power of the Powerless* Havel takes a contrasting view to the phenomenon of split selves to that of Milosz. Havel argues that living a divided existence has disastrous effects on an individual's ethical being. He is concerned by this doubling of subjectivity. Havel claims that unwanted involvement in public rituals endangers the morality of individuals' actions and can actually lead to a crumbling of the unity of self.

Milosz's ketman is a compelling concept that can be read in multiple ways. It offers important insights into the often negated or sometimes demonized "grey zone" of socialism[33]. I interpret Liiceanu and Drakulić's writings on the mask, duplicity or split selves along the lines of Milosz's ketman. The similarities between Milosz's description of ketman and those of Liiceanu and Drakulić are thought-provoking. The invocation of "ketman" as "mask" or fake invokes fragmentation and disappearance, loss of authenticity, as the wearer performs the role of an obedient social persona. The "ketman", the "mask" or a double are modes through which narrators express fear of situations that threaten the self with visions of horror about what one could turn into against one's will. Although "ketman" contains elements of agency, the use of deceit, manipulation, cunning-ness and

32 Madeline G. Levine, 'Warnings to the West: Czeszlav Milosz's Political Prose of the 1950s', in *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Poetry and Writing of Czeszlav Milosz,* ed. Edward Mozejko (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988), 118.

33 Ed. László Kürti and Peter Skalník, *Postsocialist Europe: Anthropological Perspectives from Home* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 272; For "grey zone" see Šiklová, 'The "Gray Zone"'.

lies – an array of imaginative but morally doubtful solutions for mimicking life – there is nevertheless a lack of control over those very elements that ensure survival.

Liiceanu writes about the horror a mask instils in him upon discovering that through wearing it "existence could be embellished, that something could be made manifest through a concealment."[34] In the memoir "*Dragul meu turnător"* Liiceanu narrates a meeting with the intelligence agent charged with his surveillance under the previous regime. After the Revolution the meeting takes place within the context of the newly-opened archives of the Romanian Securitate. Like many others during those times Liiceanu too is both eager, but afraid to face the truth about his past. Fear of confronting the truth is understandable as this can signify the crumbling of previous certainties. The meeting the narrator describes leaves Liiceanu perplexed. He expects to feel again the horror of that long awaited meeting but the banality of the actual encounter does not match the enormity of the experience. The effect of meeting one's past is destabilizing on the self. It forces the narrator to admit to a lack of closure and leaves him with thoughts of non-sense and absurdity. He notes:

> It's strange how the face of evil, an abstraction really, when projected on a concrete face is able to mutilate, to dislocate its features, but without being able to offer another one that is palpable and alive like the one it just dislocated.[35]

Despite the fact that, by all accounts, the meeting did take place the banality of it leaves the author-narrator, Liiceanu, perplexed. He is unable to recompose the contrasting image between what he imagined the surveillance agent to be and the man standing in front of him in all his ordinary-ness. Unable to reconcile these two images and unable to get the answers he needs the author-narrator reflects on what he intended to ask the ex-agent. In doing so, Liiceanu perhaps attempts to offer himself a little peace of mind and offer his readers a glimpse of what his confrontational dialogue would sound like. He says:

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34 Liiceanu, *Întâlnire cu un necunoscut* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010)*,* 7.

35 Liiceanu, *Dragul meu turnător* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 45.

> You, as I'd known you, had become a mask and the face underneath, the real one, had the features of an "informative note". But how does a face made of "informative notes" look like? Did that face of a snitch leave any print on your face?[36]

It is interesting to note how the fear of meeting the informer is also a fear of meeting one's own past and, with it, the difficulty of having a safe position. Liiceanu, explains:

> The feeling that a closed room had been opened … made by an unknown maker, my double, strangely ready at any moment to head towards another destiny. It was as though another life was unwrapping itself from mine, one over which I had no control over. I could be pushed at any moment on a road that, once entered, I could only be swallowed, devoured, annihilated. It was only natural that I'd be forbidden to enter this room where I found myself stained and ready for the oven. But it was not forbidden to the cook and his help. It was a mysterious place. It was the antechamber of a potential execution.[37]

The author-narrator describes a crisis of the self in which one is left without any say in one's life. The image Liiceanu offers is one of utter desolation and helplessness. The self is impotent and agency-less in the face of the oppressing power of the Securitate, the agent of state power. The landscape he describes does not seem to offer any escape or opportunity for courage, freedom or resistance. Loss of the Self is always imminent. Thus, the identity in the surveillance file from the Securitate becomes more important than his actual existence.

Drakulić uses the mask in her writing differently to Liiceanu. While Liiceanu's characters wear masks deliberately this is not so for Drakulić's characters/ author-narrator. Drakulić reports on the changing eastern European former socialist societies and how peoples' hopes for a better life after the fall of the regime are crushed. In "Letter from Zagreb" a letter the author writes apparently as an apology to a friend and editor, Frances. Drakulić tries to convey the tension over the impeding war in Yugoslavia, and the European dimension of the conflict. She talks from the position of a Balkan-

36 Liiceanu, *Dragul meu turnător,* 45.
37 Liiceanu, *Dragul meu turnător*, 45.

insider to an addressee in London. Drakulić, the author-narrator, is shocked by the renewed bloodshed in her disintegrating homeland, and tries to communicate to an insensitive audience the fact that this conflict concerns all Europeans, not only the people of ex-Yugoslavia. "Letter from Zagreb" offers readers fragments of her reflections on loneliness, the devastating effect of social alienation and the rhetoric of hate and fear of the Other that she experienced during the interwar years. She writes: "this war has another dimension. There is another hidden face of war and regardless of where we happen to be we carry this war inside us."[38] The image of the mask is present in Drakulić's writing differently. The fear that eludes the narrator is hiding behind the surface of things. Although there are visible elements that disturb the writer's world she cannot help but fear that destruction bears many guises that have yet to fully unfold. This unshakeable feeling marks its presence in various milestones in her life and her homeland's many transformations. Behind the safety and allure of solidity Drakulić fears there is falsity and fragility.

"You can't drink your coffee alone" is the story of Tanja, a female Yugoslav journalist critical of the socialist government's so-called reforms during the 1980s.[39] It is a story of becoming invisible. The story follows the painful exclusion of a journalist from all social and professional circles in the Yugoslav society of the 1980s. Forced into renouncing all her various types of official and non-official memberships, from Party membership to professional associations, she is effectively removed from the healthy body of socialism as if she were a foreign, dangerous element. Her experience of rejection as a journalist then develops into a more acute rejection of her as a human being, an autonomous person who is even stripped of dignity and sense of Self.[40] Drakulić presents the character as her real-life friend. In an attempt to understand the drama of her friend's tormented path from social alienation to suicide, Drakulić re-traces the fragments of information she has on Tanja. The story reads as a personal reflection of Drakulić's need to understand the truth about what

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38 See Slavenka Drakulić, 'Letter from Zagreb' in *How we survived communism and even laughed* (London: Vintage, 1993).

39 See Drakulić, 'You can't drink your coffee alone' in *How we survived communism and even laughed.*

40 Drakulić, 'You can't drink your coffee alone', 1-10.

had happened to her friend. Drakulić concludes that Tanja's story is more than the story of a single individual, it is the story of many women and men in Yugoslavia. It is the story of all those rendered useless and denied personhood under a perverse socialist system and who saw no other option than end their own life. The story, told as if it is the story of a friend, is much more than that. [41] As with many of her texts Drakulić starts from a personal biography that can be extended to the story of many; it may even be her own story of becoming invisible and undesired in her own home.

In "You can't drink your coffee alone", Drakulić establishes a dramatic contrast between the inner turmoil of the individual and silence. Tanja's social circles, peers, the multiple collectives she belonged to are left unaltered by her expulsion, signalling that, ultimately, the individual is disposable. Through the story Drakulić highlights that "to perceive yourself as an individual in a mass society is dangerous. You might become living proof that the system is failing".[42] The system as Drakulić describes, annihilates any sense of Self. The ending of her story is tragic. Unable to imagine or craft a way of being for herself the character commits suicide to avoid becoming a burden on her family and her close ones. Through this story Drakulić portrays the perversity of the oppressive Yugoslav system. She writes:

> It had become obvious that the system of 'self-management' Yugoslavia was so proud of was a ruse, invented to make you believe that you – not the government or the party – are to blame. It was the most perfect system among the one-party states, set up to internalize guilt, blame, failure, or fear, to teach you how you yourself should censor your thoughts and deeds and, at the same time, to make you feel that you had more freedom than anyone in Eastern Europe.[43]

Drakulić uses "You can't drink your coffee alone" to expose the perversity of the Yugoslav political system. While she herself confesses to growing up in a generation of politically passive citizens, as an adult she comes to the conclusion that Yugoslavs have paid a high price for their alleged

41 See Drakulić, 'You can't drink your coffee alone'.
42 Drakulić, *How we survived communism and even laughed*, 26.
43 Drakulić, 'You can't drink your coffee alone', 6.

progressive socialism. Drakulić admits that Yugoslavs did enjoy more freedom of travel and commodity goods than people in other eastern European socialist countries, but that this economic liberalisation did not necessarily mean greater freedom in the true sense of the word. On the contrary, she concludes that Yugoslav liberalism might have functioned as a substitute for freedom while individuals continued to live their lives in a cage.

The central character in Drakulić's "The language of Soup" is Zsuzsa, a Yugoslav woman who married a Hungarian man and moved to Hungary in 1954. The narrator describes their relationship as "the peaceful existence of two intellectuals in communism who don't expect much from life, and in typical Central European fashion are content that it isn't getting any worse."[44] The story essentially deals with the double compromise of women under socialism. The first compromise is a renunciation of their alleged emancipation by returning to traditional gender roles and retreating into family life. The second compromise is a renunciation of their personhood as they hide behind the facade of marriage. The name of the story is in itself an allusion to the Hungarian regime of "goulash socialism", a compromise between Marxism and the local Hungarian context after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. As in other stories, Drakulić draws parallels between individual destinies and regimes, in this instance the compromise of the failed reform in Hungary and the failed women's emancipation in socialist regimes. The story is set in a domestic environment usually associated with family and safety. This environment represents the symbolic realm to which individuals are forced to retreat and is thus a symbol of their lost freedom. Drakulić's focus and exploration of the domestic realm – home, apartments, private space – in the context of socialist regimes also represents a desire for safe spaces in which individuals express their individuality, their true selves away from the dangerous public realm. The act of speech – an apparently banal chat about everyday life between two women – is a critique of the Yugoslav and Hungarian socialist

44 Drakulić, 'The language of soup' in *How we survived communism and even laughed,* 106.

regimes. As the two women, the narrator Drakulić and her dialogue partner Zsuzsa talk soup, family and politics, they engage in acts that reveal their lack of support for the regime. Although their critique does not occur in the public domain – either physically or symbolically – their act is a manifestation of agency.

The women's exchange represents the regime's failure to support their needs and to satisfy its own citizens. Following the failed reform movements and collective uprisings against the regime the dissidents are forced to retreat from the agora to the private realm. Through these intimate and banal discussions in the domestic field, Drakulić shows how socialist systems were ultimately, with time, eroded by their own citizens. The lack of support and legitimation for the regimes was sustained within these daily domestic rituals. However, Drakulić's tale is double-sided. While the retreat into the private meant a safe-haven for individuals and a space for risk-free critique, it did nevertheless mean a renunciation of ideals of solidarity and fighting for social justice. Here Drakulić suggests that through the failure and perversity of the socialist regimes the humanist ideals suffered. Retrieving and salvaging these ideals become a struggle after the fall of the regime for Drakulić herself. Drakulić reflects on how similar her own circumstance is to that of her character. Although they live in different countries and societies, the regime is the same; their role, practices and limitations are the same.

The description of a character such as Zsuzsa in the context of post-1956 Hungary offers the reader a deeper understanding of individual drama. Through her tale of the character's emotions and life drama, Drakulić makes the political personal. Beyond historic events lies the human drama. For instance the disillusionment that many hopeful individuals, Drakulić included, felt after the crushing of the reformist movement and the events of 1956 are presented in a personal light. Similarly the social compromise of the Kádár regime goulash communism, presented by Drakulić is not as a mere

footnote in the history annals, it is life-changing for people such as Zsuzsa. Furthermore, for dramatic effect and in order to convey empathy Drakulić draws a symbolic parallel between society's compromise and the compromise of the character. Hungarian society renounces their individuality and freedom for security and stability, Zsuzsa on the other hand exchanges her fight for gender equality and freedom for retreat into the safe realm of private family life, the last bastion where an individual can breathe and be at peace.

In these stories Drakulić offers readers her own path to understanding the experience of living under socialism. The stories of Zsuzsa, Tanja and Drakulić's many characters, offer readers a glimpse into the intimate universe of living under socialism. As a communist dissident and critic Drakulić's stance is different from Liiceanu's critique of Marxism and the socialist state. She imagines and offers a legitimate alternative to Marxism and reformist socialism. Accordingly, her stories give a voice to the shock and disappointment felt as a result of the failure to secure a space for critique from within "real existing socialism". The sad compromise and consolidation of the Kádár regime is seen as a defeat by Drakulić. On this she notes: "When there is no space in society to express your individuality, the family becomes the only territory in which you can form it, exercise it, prove it, express it."[45]

In "The language of Soup" Drakulić stresses the centrality of individualism at the intersection between the state's demands for homogenization and the individual's need for expression of the Self. The conflict between the two lies in the state's aim to annihilate the individual while the individual strives for affirmation of personhood and pursuit of private interest. Drakulić explains how the human drama is inevitable in a socialist setting. For the socialist state, personhood is an expression of petty personal interest that threatens the well-being of the many, of the collective body. The socialist state thus strives to erase critical judgment, individual responsibility, individual will, taste,

45 Drakulić, *How we survived communism and even laughed,* 107.

individual difference and privacy. The conflict and drama exposes the fact that the very conceptualization of the socialist individual is flawed. The individual as citizen or comrade, in the socialist understanding of it, is denied individual interest and is only conceptualized as part of a homogeneous mass. As such, the socialist individual has to give up personal interest and has to display solidarity. This leads to a situation in which personal needs are denied and are not recognized and satisfied by the state. With her continuous insistence on the theme of the individual Drakulić brings to the fore what she sees as the central tension at the heart of the socialist project: the failure of the state to understand the needs of its citizens. Unlike Liiceanu, Drakulić does not criticise socialist regimes on account of their "totalitarian" nature, but on their inability to serve their own citizens. Drakulić's technique here is to turn the personal, the story of the individual, into the political. She explains to the reader both the human individual drama by referring to the political and, at the same time, allows for a deeper understanding of the political by showing examples from the individual experience.

In Liiceanu and Drakulić's writings the characters' and the author-narrators' fear of losing their integrity and individuality, their very precarious existence, is an ever-present threat. The characters are confronted by the ethical compromises they make, the masks they wear to meet themselves and others. Importantly, the characters make a connection between their fear of losing integrity or wholeness and turning into the imagined Other. They precariously balance self censorship to ensure survival with cunning to ensure freedom of spirit. The mask is thus a metaphor for the fear of falsity, lie, inauthenticity, that is hard to identify because it comes in various guises which are sometimes apparently human. Betrayal and lies always come from a person, a human face that turns the everyday experience of individuals and their social relationships into the grotesque. The absurd, the falsity of one's existence is delivered from either a friend turned informer, a neighbour, a partner or one's family. The mask in fact conceals the false face of the friend, neighbour, partner, family

turned informant.

Liiceanu and Drakulić's reflections in *Dragul meu turnător* and *A Chat with my Censor* respectively express their fear that they themselves, under pressure, could turn into a mask, self-censor their moral system and strive only for survival. These writers fear that this way of living will lead them to dissimulation in a space devoid of civil society and solidarity. Through their short stories and reflections on them, Liiceanu and Drakulić question the authenticity of their own life events and relationships. They are anxious about the creation of fragmented selves, who have internalised "antipolitical privatism" and dissimulation as coping strategies for alleviating external pressures. Norman Manea's account of "depersonalization disorder" "in an atomized world of caricature masks, mixtures and malformations"[46] is useful to understand Liiceanu and Drakulić's concerns about living with state demands for homogenization. In their memoir-inspired short stories, Liiceanu and Drakulić express their fear of a destabilized sense of self differently.
Liiceanu's "The Forbidden Door" is intended as an allusion to a hidden part of the Self which the newly formed philosophy would not allow to be shown. The depression, the crisis, the loss of the "system of illusions" and, finally, the necessary betrayal of the Master are all human emotions that a philosopher could not express. Liiceanu uses the term "depression" or the phrase "system of illusions"[47] to describe the process of reconciling the sense of a crumbling self with that of a double. The author-narrator takes the reader on a life journey through an existential, desolate, unstable political landscape, the outcome of which appears yet unknown to the narrator himself. The words the author-narrator uses reflect the inner turmoil of the crisis of the self, its: "heart aches", "panic", "dread", "ugliness" and "stillness". The author-narrator reflects on the notion of stability of the self from the perspective of instability as a "system of illusions". He explains:

46 Norman Manea, *Laughter of Duplicity, Laughter of Hope* (Bloomington, Indiana: [Item] Manea mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University), 98.
47 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002), 15.

> The “system of illusions”... “the existential carrot” life puts before us and waves in front of us ... That's how the meaning of our life is born. It's just that we are the ones creating the food we sniff endlessly with every new day and this endless fabrication of the “system of illusions” is the guarantee of our mental health ... the collapse of the illusion system, is an existential shedding of layers. When the illness appears it triggers the mechanism. Our awareness adapts to the ambiguity of things giving off just the right amount of dose needed to conceal each finding. Depression is the insurrection of the unseen. The surface, the main quarters of splendor, is forced to abdicate. What reigns now is the profound, the nothingness, the abyss, everything that had stood lurching till that moment.[48]

The crisis of the self is dully recorded and re-told by the narrator. The crisis for Liiceanu revolves around the very elements that together constituted the unity between his private self – interests, principles, values – and his public persona, the trained specialist who followed a determined path, the voice with authority in his field. He describes the process of dissimulation in detail from an emotional angle, and suggests that it is irreversible. This disillusionment is contrary to the epistemology of philosophy, his creed and career, and high culture, Kultur. The author-narrator says:

> I am losing elements that were constituent parts of my Bildung ... Everything I've read, gone through, underlined, annotated – with extreme care – in my thirties and forties is now gone. It's not just secondary readings, but precisely those that were part of my essential training ... What is also serious is that I am not interested in going back to them anymore ... How did I end up here? How did I completely lose the superstition of culture? Is this only about an increasing lessening or a desperate desire to reach myself mask-less, without any tricks or glitter?[49]

Liiceanu resolved the crisis of the Self, of leading an inauthentic life lived in contradiction with one's principles, through the Narrator’s rebellion against his old Master, against an entire tradition of thought, against a discipline that could not be fulfilled under the constraints of Marxist-Leninism. The author-narrator’s rebellion allowed the Self to emerge. He says: “My mask-less thought free from any cultural duties was everywhere. Moreover, there was shamelessness in it, the owning of the beginning of a confession. Shy and hesitant, I was trying to get closer to myself.”[50] Using this

48 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 15.
49 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 19.
50 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 20-1.

writing strategy allows Liiceanu to secure the loyalty of his old audience and reinvent his identity as a writer, and forge a new authoritative voice. The community of readers meet this new voice, Gabriel Liiceanu's twin or other side, a playful Gemini and part of the Self, who could not previously find a voice. Liiceanu recalls episodes from his *Păltiniş Diary* in which he recorded that he showed this side of himself within a circle of intimate friends, but never before in front of such a large audience. Liiceanu notes that the Romanian version of the ketman, the so-called "lizard", as a solution to counteract censorship and its effects on Romanian cultural life used by many of his fellow writers, is unavailable to him inasmuch as he was a philosopher.[51] Reflecting whether to follow the approach of inner freedom of spirit and its disregard for ethics such a choice would entail, Liiceanu writes in *Ușa Interzisă:*

> The trouble was that I did not have a 'me' due to my background. As I was not a writer I could not re-cast myself in characters, I could not tap, as if in an eternal disguise, on the taps of humanity actually talking about myself. I could not direct my joining the scene of the world and I could not parade, under the safety of various masks, the beauty and meanness tied together in the bundle of my only self. The "I", just like the "I" of every person on this world, together with my thoughts, my collapses, my exaltations and obsessions, was not interested in philosophy. It was merely put into brackets, relegated to the precarious realm of the 'tiny soul' like Noica called it, it was lynched as a recipient of fears, remorse, regrets, imaginary and real wrongdoings. Even its dreams were considered guilty and impure as they were deemed to drag one down, closer to the Self instead of sending you to a place of positive forgetting, in the painless, passionless, geometrical and speculative empire of the Spirit.[52]

Liiceanu fears losing the unity of self as a conflict emerges before him. The conflict is represented as a trade-off or an impossible choice. The first option is to choose the "Philosophical" path of the Noican School where the self must necessarily be detached from the world. The second choice is a full engagement with ethics and a commitment of responsibility towards the world to which he belongs. Conflicted over these thoughts he writes:

51 For more on the term "lizard" and the phenomenon of aesthetic autonomy see Ioana Preda, *Resisting through Culture in Communist Romania: Taking the Public's Perspective* (Warwick University, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, Dissertation, 2012); Maria-Alina Asavei, *Rewriting the Canon of Visual Arts in Communist Romania. A Case Study* (Budapest: Central European University, Dissertation, 2007).

52 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 21.

> The philosopher does not keep a diary, but a diary of ideas, his biography is of no interest to anyone. … This chastity or perhaps this pride would mutilate all of them: their thinking was going one way, their lives the other way. They would cry silently, suffered silently, experienced rupture, desire, breakdowns – silently. They all avoided ethics precisely because they did not know how to integrate their lives and how to own its worldly immorality.[53]

In this reflection Liiceanu distances himself from his previous intellectual life. He refuses to continue supporting the pillars of philosophical work that required isolation, detachment and renunciation of the self. The work itself, *Ușa Interzisă,* is an act which marks his rejection and "betrayal" of philosophy. He criticizes the absence of the self in philosophical works, and attempts to understand the failure of the philosophers themselves to successfully harmonise their biography with their writings.

The crisis of the self and fragmentation, which started in the *Păltiniş Diary* and continues in *Ușa Interzisă,* is expressed as an unavoidable rebellion and a descent into the unknown. The self is no longer fixed to any tradition or discipline as was the case during his *Păltiniş* period under the guide of his master Noica. Liiceanu, the author-narrator in *Ușa Interzisă,* explains:

> When I realized I was about to lose my 'professional identity' it was too late to fix anything. I had fallen into a cultural void, I had lost the illusion of solid ground; the label that had fixed me somewhere, in a category of the Spirit, had now turned yellow, effaced, fallen. I was 'country-less'. My discourse could not be attributed a specific category. Even worse, it was threatened to be extinct by not being able to belong to any pre-determined category. The external reference point that provides the Spirit with a sense of orientation and the certainty of a path no longer existed...I had wished so to be a writer ... but I was not. I was no 'interpreter' any longer either ... I was no 'philosopher' any longer either ...[54]

In *Ușa Interzisă,* Liiceanu questions the safety of knowing one's identity or having the certainty of belonging. Reflecting on the particular historic circumstance he finds himself in and the sense of falsity around him, Liiceanu questions whether knowing the self is possible. Liiceanu asks:

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53 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 21.
54 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 25-26.

> Why should I be so afraid of losing my identity? Had I truly ever had it? Was I not living in a world, a country and a time in history that systematically sabotaged the birth of identity? ... the world in which I lived was made up in such a way that the majority of people would flunk: they faked playing their roles, they would only do it halfhearted or play badly. This is why the world I lived in was infantilised, a world designed never to grow up. In my case, social identity was all the more feeble: I almost had no role to play or, in a manner similar to the unaligned humanist intellectual, I would simply play a dummy.[55]

In this reflection Liiceanu attributes a very important role to how political dimensions shape an individual's sense of self. His retrospective thinking leads him to conclude that he could not develop fully as an individual because he could not engage with the political in an open manner. To complicate things further, Liiceanu also reflects on how the duplicitous behavioural strategies around him crippled individuals. In this particular reflection Liiceanu equates being apolitical with being insufficiently developed as an adult and as an individual.

In his critique of modern societies, Stuart Hall explained the fear of losing a stable sense of self as a crisis of identity in which "the subject previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities."[56] Hall's discussion of identity is useful for reading Liiceanu and Drakulić's writings on the sense of split selves, self-censorship and the self in relation to the Other. For instance, in both Liiceanu and Drakulić's autobiographical texts and life writing there is an obvious effort to construct an image of the self as unitary. This desire stands in contrast to what we know from the theory on Identity, which is that there is no single coherent stable self. According to Hall, the subject is comprised of various identities which are not unified around a coherent self. The perception of a unified identity is a desire for stability rather than the expression of a state of fact. This happens in different ways in Liiceanu and Drakulić's texts. Liiceanu narrates a crisis of self, first as a reflection on social atomisation under communism, then as a crumbling of the "system of

55 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 26-27.
56 Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, Kenneth Thompson, *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 598.

illusions” and finally through a dichotomous Self-Other relation. Drakulić's crisis of identity stems from a threat to her sense of Self, the fear of losing oneself in an oppressive homogeneity that crushes individuality silently, but efficiently. In an effort to consolidate the self and resolve the crisis both writers resort to using multiple voices to represent parts of the self. Liiceanu uses the stories of others to reflect and find a desired version of himself while Drakulić gives voice to the experiences of the silent and the vulnerable.

Liiceanu uses the Doppelgänger to depict the shadow-Self as double. In *Dragul meu turnător* Liiceanu tells the story of a real-life event. Like many fellow east Europeans after the fall of socialism, Liiceanu wishes to confront his past by accessing, for the first time, his Securitate surveillance file.[57] The actual reading and accessing of the file was not a single event in time, but it signified a strong commitment on the part of the requesting party to find out the truth. The act of wanting to confront one’s past by accessing one’s surveillance file represented a principal milestone for individuals and societies in post-regime eastern Europe. The significance of the gesture lies in the fact that the post-regime period represented a time of enormous societal change, conflict and upheaval. As individuals and societies strove to transition from socialism to democracy, opinions differed greatly as to what approach was best: whether to forget and forgive or to confront and distribute justice on the recent past? Confronting the truth about one’s past, about the honesty or dishonesty, loyalty or disloyalty, about one’s social relationships, could be a destabilizing factor. This is the context in which Liiceanu makes his choice. His desire to put it in writing is a message to his community of readers that truth represents an act of liberation. Liiceanu compares the surveillance file to a novel, a story that parallels reality, his real life. The events, the characters, the details in the text are based on the ones in his real life, the life he knew. The life he never knew existed, the disfiguration of his experiences, was designed and recorded by the Secret Police.

57 The infamous “Securitate” was the name attributed to the Romanian Secret Police during the socialist regime.

Liiceanu's Doppelgänger story in *Dragul meu turnător* is a story about being transformed against one's will into another being. Even as the socialist regime fell, Liiceanu is in shock to find out that his "real" life was being carefully watched, his privacy corrupted by the tainted hands of the Securitate. The significance of the Doppelgänger here can be read in multiple ways. Firstly, Liiceanu's double in the surveillance file can be interpreted as Liiceanu's wish to highlight the almighty power of the institution of the Securitate and its destabilizing effect on people's lives. The double can also be read as Liiceanu's loss or lack of power under a regime in which individuals are politically infantile and have no say over their own lives. Finally, the double can be read as Liiceanu's other self which became lost, or lost meaning, once the socialist regime fell. This idea also resonates with Liiceanu's frequent use of the image of his Gemini "brother", his other playful side, his literary side which was not previously allowed to be made public. Liiceanu constructs the parallel existence of this evil Doppelgänger as a threat to his "real" self, a danger that threatens to de-stabilize his existence. He terms the shock of discovery a "second baptism". For Liiceanu, gaining knowledge of the existence of a parallel Self is akin to receiving a new identity, a new name, the code name of his surveillance file and all the invented features this new self would receive as part of the surveillance process.[58]

In *Dragul meu turnător* Liiceanu's use of the image-metaphor of the Doppelgänger is clearly inspired by Totalitarian Paradigm literature such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel*, Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* or Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* were written against the backdrop of totalitarian regimes. The story reveals the world reigned through horror and the distress caused by mutilation of his life carried out by the Secret Police surveillance. In *Dragul meu turnător* Liiceanu writes:

58 See Liiceanu, *Dragul meu turnător.*

> They had actually designed a new life for me. Apparently, the life in the File of which I knew nothing about copied the real one... It was... my double ready to eliminate me. Me really, but a negative "me", "me – the enemy" that, should the case be, needed to be eliminated. This second life accompanied me from the shadows – actually, it was my shadow – miming in a contorted manner the gestures of my real life ...The Secret Police was building a replica of myself. It had spread its tentacles in all the corners of my being and waited, at any moment, to substitute my free healthy being with its creature ... At any time, based on this construct, I could be sent for a trip in a future gulag, in any of the gulags that a threatened power could imagine because there is someone unwilling to inhabit its mental stereotypes.[59]

Liiceanu builds a narrative around texts such as this. He conveys the message that the socialist society is a closed reality with absolute power over those innocent individuals who can be eliminated should the ruling powers wish to do so. There is no doubt that socialist regimes were oppressive and relied on officially-endorsed powers of enforcement to secure their maintenance. However, critical literature on socialist regimes has long challenged the image of the socialist state as a monolithic mechanism. We now know that power, in the political apparatus, was exerted in an arbitrary manner.[60] Liiceanu's text is not particularly helpful with respect to an accurate image of the many different experiences in socialism. Having made this qualification, the account is helpful, though, in offering an individual experience that many intellectuals have suffered.

In the short story "A Chat with my censor" Drakulić highlights the perennial presence of these guardians of political orthodoxism in the lives of writers and intellectuals in socialist regimes. Although Drakulić's image of fear does not draw from the language of Totalitarian literature, fear of becoming engulfed by a world of falsity is depicted in Drakulić's writing. Her writing stems from a journalist's intimate observations of the world inside and around her. Drakulić's fear of transformation from a free individual with a clear sense of selfhood to yet another fearful, paranoid and obedient citizen appears once a meeting with her censor occurs. The bureaucrat in charge of censorship is usually portrayed in memoirs, life writings or literature on socialism in general, by

59 Liiceanu, *Dragul meu turnător,* 196.

60 See Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

other authors as a monstrous figure that destroys the lives of his victims.[61] What is striking about Drakulić's writing is her choice of narrative strategy to convey the role that this figure plays in her life. Unlike the image of the brute-like and unmannered censors, the censor who contacts Drakulić to meet her for a “regular meeting” presents himself in a very different light. With gentleness and politeness the man in power warns her off from the start in a voice “a little nasal, but pleasant”: “I don’t look like what I am”.[62] There are no surprise visits in the middle of the night, no signs of the abuse of power and threats in his tone of voice. Drakulić’s censor is well-mannered and educated. Readers of totalitarian or socialist-themed texts are left puzzled by this, but become relaxed as the story will be a funny one. Drakulić is actually intrigued by this well-known, yet elusive figure and starts to add human-like features to this “mythological” creature who haunts and threatens the lives and freedom of writers. She writes:

> My first reaction was curiosity; I had never met with any S.D.B. inspectors, perhaps because I was not important enough. Therefore, this was my opportunity to see the S.D.B.'s power personified in one man. Is he tall or short? How does he dress? What does he do with his hands while he talks to you? I guess this was a reaction to the literary tradition, to the long line of books describing K.G.B. officers interrogating hundreds of thousands - no, millions - of people in Lubjanka, forcing them to admit to things they never did and then sending them to an icy death in Siberia.[63]

She admits that her initial curiosity over meeting the face of power is soon replaced by the fear of making the inventory of her sins. The narrative becomes tense over the preparations of this meeting as an entire process of self-analysis and self-interrogation is initiated in order to best prepare for the actual encounter. This is a crucial list to make and it is a process necessary in order to best face censorship and prepare the defence:

> But what could he ask me? I'm a journalist at a political magazine and I'm not a member of the party… which of the articles in the last issue could have attracted the attention of the S.D.B. man, to make him decide to call me? I was trying to figure out comrade

61 See Liviu Malița, *Literatura eretică. Texte cenzurate politic între 1949 și 1977* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească 2016).
62 Drakulić, ‘A Chat with my Censor’, in *How we survived communism and even laughed*, 76.
63 Drakulić, ‘A Chat with my Censor’, 77.

> inspector M's perspective on my sins: disturbing public opinion; espousing unacceptable ideas imported from the West; introducing values foreign to our socialist self-management society, untruthful and dangerous information?... It could be any or all of it.[64]

Through her meeting with the censor Drakulić sees herself through the lens of a censor. She questions what could have been her wrong-doings. Has she shown solidarity with any state organisation, any association? Does she write dangerous texts? Is she associated with the "wrong" people, with the wrong milieu? She slowly builds an image of her potential surveillance profile. The image can be problematic from the perspective of Party censorship and therefore worrisome for her, but then again, there is no way of knowing. There is no sensible manner in which one can put oneself in the shoes of the censor and imagine wrongdoings. The point of view of the regime is ever changing and what are deemed "errors" change every day. The actual meeting is banal, she considers herself to have been "too cheerful and easy-going" defensive even and he is too charming and polite.[65] The scene is rendered surreal and atypical against the image of a classic interrogation. Despite the pleasantness and banality of the encounter, Drakulić concludes that the surveillance system operates with the unknowing assistance of those being monitored. She herself has done the self-censorship work the censor demands. She concludes that the true meeting was not the one she just had, but that it had actually consisted in the process of self-examination and self-interrogation, a far more efficient and sophisticated tool than any censor could hope to devise. What Drakulić conveys in 'A Chat with my Censor' is the subtlety and perversity of the Yugoslav system. In appearance, the Yugoslav society seemed to many, Drakulić included, the most humane application of socialism. Compared to the more restrictive east European societies, Yugoslavs enjoyed more freedom. However, Drakulić wants to show how this freedom was, in fact, a fantasy that actually ensured the regime's maintenance of power over time. By highlighting the fact that control and oppression can also be exerted by individuals themselves Drakulić pinpoints the true nature of how censorship functioned and how individuals themselves contributed to their lack of freedom.

64 Drakulić, 'A Chat with my Censor', 78.
65 Drakulić, *How we survived communism and even laughed,* 79.

2 Life writing. The making of the Self and Representation

Here I make several suggestions in an attempt to provide a “definition” of life writing in a postsocialist context. These suggestions touch upon the issue of subjectivity, representation, voice, positioning in the cultural field as public intellectuals, audience, and so on. It follows that life writing, as discussed in this thesis, emerged in a very specific context and served several purposes. These purposes were: 1) life writing as participation in memory politics; 2) life writing as *Bildung* in the construction of a coherent Self in narration; and, 3) life writing as an instrument of re-legitimation for public intellectuals in the post-socialist public arena. The totality of these functions is the “definition” of life writing. I address these purposes below.

In a valuable reading of life writing in the east European postsocialist context Estonian scholar Ene Kõresaar suggests that it is as a sub-genre of a wider phenomenon which may be called the politics of memory. She argues writers used life writing as a medium through which to participate in and challenge rigid and incomplete official public memory narratives as well as to build collective memory. With the same understanding Latvian social scientist Martins Kaprans writes that “autobiographers are not just isolated and lonely storytellers, but also memory agents who mould the past by adding a subjective dimension as well as furthering the memory discourse”.[66] Romanian literary critic Dan C. Mihailescu, within a similar context explains that memorialistic literature and life writing first represented "the retrieval of the censored past, [which was] either totally forbidden or truncated, distorted. This was followed by our terrible hunger for model biographies, the hunger for [learning about] failed or fulfilled destinies – whether at the center, the margin or just in the hidden corners of history"[67]. Similarly, Ioana Luca suggests that the proliferation of life writing in

66 Kaprans, M. 2016. "Between improvisation and inevitability: former Latvian officials’ memoirs of the Soviet era.“ Journal of Baltic Studies, Vol. 47, No. 4, 537-555: 539.

67 Dan C. Mihailescu, *Literatura română în postceaușism. I. Memorialistica sau trecutul ca re-umanizare*, Ed. Polirom, 2004, pp.10-11.

the Romanian postsoscialist context "powerfully relates to the bridging, negotiating, or just healing of its many-sided symbolic fractures" in society.[68] Moreover, she claims "life narratives have functioned in the former communist bloc as a form of counter-memory" fulfilling the need to regain a sense of truth and reality.[69] Editor Ioana Parvulescu, in this sense, speaks of the need to document, with a vengeance, the past and the present as a "vaccine" of sorts against "historical diseases".[70]

Thus, life writing fulfils the society-wide demand for testimony in the 1990s. Bearing witness to past injustice and coming forward with a truth-seeking experience becomes part of a larger stream of efforts aimed at a collective reparation of the past. Personal literature, life writing, egodocuments and autobiographies, in the context of postsocialist east European societies, offered life experiences that stood in sharp contrast to the unreliable historiography of the previous authoritarian regimes. For all its limitations and problems, life writing, in response to the repressive nature of the postsocialist time and its context, fulfilled the need to tell and listen to truth in the public space.

This section examines the problematic use of representation in Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts to construct and reflect reality in life writing. Life writing operates on the principle of Bildung, the idea that to write about the self implies performing, constructing or making the self.[71] The author by means of narration is the creator of a closed universe that the reader in turn experiences as a finite, unitary reality. Through the process of narration, which includes plot, structure, language, as well as the coordinates of time and space, the author constructs the "right" structure to accommodate their vision of the self. Representation of reality, events, people all tend to be aligned to a central notion of the self. In the process of creating and fixing the Self, the narrator uses the faculty of imagination in order to build a composite whole from his fragmentary accounts from his/her accounts.

68 Ioana Luca, Life Writing in Full Bloom: The year in Romania.
69 Ioana Luca, Life Writing in Full Bloom: The year in Romania.
70 Ioana Parvulescu, *Dicționarul navetei* in Cãlin-Andrei Mihãilescu (ed.), C*um era? Cam așa… Amintiri din anii comunismului (românesc),* Curtea veche Publishing, Bucureşti, 2006, pp.43-48.
71 Bildung refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation, a process of both personal and cultural maturation, fulfilment.

This inherent dimension of imagining in life writing consists of establishing a “narrative identity” of the self. It is an act of constitution of the self in which the often dispersed and contingent fragments of the self are perceived, re-arranged and presented as a unified whole. Telling the self in a narrative form is oftentimes a process of self-explanation, self-discovery, self-clarification and self-justification through which the author invents the self by connecting, ordering, deleting, adding and modifying past events. Paul Ricoeur views the constitution of narrative identity in the process of telling the self as an imitation of action. That is, through the process of writing the author is the reader and writer of one's own life. In this understanding, writing becomes a mediation between reality and intentionality, between “what is” and “what ought to be”.[72]

Life writing provides an opportunity for writers to be in a position of power they may not have had in the past. Transforming this life experience into writing can be understood as an exorcism of trauma or catharsis. The act of speech may become a desire to heal the self. As Norman Manea suggests “anamnesis” may turn into a therapeutic process of recovering one's past.[73] Accordingly, writing about one's life, as a writer-creator may constitute an attempt at self-definition, remembrance as a first stage in the process of recovery. By using ‘anamnesis’ as a memory-recovery mechanism Norman Manea avoids mystifying memory while successfully reclaiming his traumatic past. Avoiding the pitfalls of memory-work Manea recalls the past in an orderly and systematic fashion insofar as painful events, people, details are summoned to appear before the writer in the process of narration.[74] Manea says that “Amintirea se hrăneşte din regretul care ne înlănţuie de cei pe care nu îi mai putem recupera”[75] [Memory feeds on the regret that chains us to those whom we can no longer recuperate]. His use of remembrance is a call for critical memory as an antidote and a manner of processing grief over loss. To this end Liiceanu engages with life

72 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 114-5.
73 See Norman Manea, *Întoarcerea huliganului* (Iași: Polirom, 2003).
74 See Manea, *Întoarcerea huliganului.*
75 Manea, *Întoarcerea huliganului*, 116.

writing in diary form, which he shares with his readers once the healing has occurred. Liiceanu addresses the reader directly to achieve immediacy, directness, intimacy, as if the narration were a mutually decided act of dialogue between the writer and reader. Liiceanu's use of diary form is consistent with immediacy and dialogue. The diary form, with its immediacy, is sympathetic to his goal of rehabilitation or recuperating the self. To this effect he writes, using questions and first person speech:

> What does my diary capture? ... Can one look at one's life as an expedition? Can one be conqueror and conquered at the same time? I am trying to escape the disaster I am in not by writing, but through the telling of a story ...I live, with only a single character, the script of 'A Thousand and One Nights': I continuously tell myself a story so as to postpone the ending.[76]

There is conscientious awareness in Manea's writing that is missing in Liiceanu's writing. The will to cure oneself from a difficult past through the process of writing is present, but it seems uncertain. Whereas Manea makes it clear from the very beginning that his process of remembrance – or anamnesis as he calls it – is a rational choice to save himself and his past from oblivion. Liiceanu's reflections leave the impression that he himself does not know the outcome of the process.

Drakulić, as the narrator imposes her own account of the past.[77] Drakulić focuses on alternative memory rather than the canonical Totalitarian-inspired paradigm. To this end she remembers and represents past everyday history. In doing so she finds the audience who is most receptive to that version of truth. She needs to communicate to a wider audience – domestic and international, her generation but also to younger generations – the plurality of perspectives and stories on the recent past. For Liiceanu, the position of writer-creator allows him to mend past silences. Writing about the self is his strategy for reclaiming individuality, and a sense of self after the experience of homogenization, and the suppression of the individual either in a nationalist, cultural or political

76 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 242.
77 This is a subject I develop in detail in Chapter 6.

project during and after the fall of the regime. Both writers use their personal stories to connect to wider phenomena including the collective experience of trauma in repressive societies, ultra-nationalist postcommunist contexts and a sense of loss and confusion in rapidly changing contexts.

In their life writing and construction of Self, both Drakulić and Liiceanu rely on their stories and characters' voices to convey their messages. Drakulić does so by presenting each character in his/her own right usually within a short story. The reader is never sure what the relationship between the narrator of the story and the character is, whether the event is real or imagined, whether indeed it is ficto-critical, based on a true story, with the details manipulated by the narrator. The manner in which the stories are constructed discourages questions about whether they are fact or fiction because Drakulić re-constructs the past convincingly in the language, style, register, cultural codes of the era to create a bond between the writer-narrator and the reader. The reader is convinced that the facts behind the narrative are not relevant. Drakulić's insight and credible voice creates a sense of understanding and solidarity with the hardships and drama of her characters so that the reader easily identifies with them. Through this process the need for factual evidence recedes into the background. But, of course, facts are important. Through the selection of particular facts the narrator conveys some experiences and ignores others.

In some texts, Drakulić shifts between narrator and participating character in her writing by including monologues through which she identifies with her characters. Liiceanu has a different writing strategy. He casts himself in most stories. He creates more or less anonymous characters who reflect real-life experiences that his domestic audience can easily identify. Unlike Drakulić, Liiceanu does not identify with his characters in their mutually-shared experiences, nor does he use multiple voices in his narrative style. He intermingles the narration time of the past with apparently present-time monologues or imaginary dialogues. However, his position remains fixed inside the

narrative structure throughout. Both writers carefully select the voices of the characters to give credibility to their own views. Drakulić and Liiceanu both use various language registers, ranging from the formal to the informal, the latter including the use of communist-era jokes, as well as philosophical, political and scientific discourse.

To construct her Self, Drakulić writes from the perspective of an individual from a country that no longer exists. She lives in a new country to which she cannot belong. Forced by circumstance to migrate, she is an intellectual, a woman, a transnational migrant, a multi-linguist, both Western and "Eastern European". Her status as an intellectual cannot be defined safely as exilic. However, Drakulić had the experience of being *persona non grata* and not welcomed in Franjo Tudjman ruled Croatia, which was a hostile and segregating environment. Drakulić might be described as a migrant intellectual who attempted to craft herself a transitional identity and audience. As I explain later, Drakulić occupies a cosmopolitan position identifying as Croat and Yugoslav. She uses free indirect speech as she intermingles private voices – as a woman, journalist, citizen, mother, writer – with her public voice as a published author and intellectual. Drakulić speaks from and to Yugoslavia, Croatia, Stockholm, Vienna, Western and Eastern Europe in Serbo-Croatian, Italian and English. As she directs her ideas in English and Serbo-Croat to audiences in the so-called West, the North-Atlantic and western Europe, and eastern Europe, Drakulić speaks to and for her generation and the younger generation at risk of not knowing the recent past. She is a privileged educated multilingual cosmopolitan with the freedom to travel. She is not politically aligned with the central power in her "native" land, Croatia. She is not part of nor does she speak for a nationalist Croatian political establishment. She finds herself in opposition to the establishment that supports a Croat post-Yugoslav nationalistic regime. She is neither marginal nor silent because she does enjoy cultural capital in her homeland. Drakulić has secured a transnational audience.

Drakulić does not commit either to a stable position within a national Croat community or to a cosmopolitan approach which would involve being fixed in no tradition or belonging. Unlike her fellow Croatian writer Dubravka Ugresić who identifies herself as a postmodern fragmented exilic persona, Drakulić shifts between the notion of a lost "Yugoslav identity" and a transnational audience.[78] It is clear in her writings that Drakulić strives to craft a space from which she can achieve a credible public voice. This is a difficult feat. It implies the ability to envision and craft an identity liberated from the language of nationalist rhetoric and discourses connected to the disintegration of her homeland Yugoslavia. It also involves the need to reject patriarchal notions some of which are associated with Balkan cultures. Finally, it involves the need to retain a sense of identification while embracing a transnational persona. On the one hand, Drakulić refuses to self-identify with some national or postnational identity markers thus expressing her desire to belong to and recuperate a stable home(land); on the other hand, she refuses to be contained by the category 'national'. Within this context, life writing became a space for her to redefine the notion of home(land), the nation, borders and belonging. Self-identification and finding a stable subject-position was difficult in the 1990s post-Yugoslav context in which national, linguistic, religious dimensions were narrowly-defined. This is why for many writers, Drakulić included, the only authentic and credible subject-position is flexible, fluid, shifting, ambivalent.[79] Although she plays the part of guide and uses travel as a means of understanding a region, Drakulić is never just a visitor or a tourist inside the territories she travels. She positions herself in between, in a median place between the gaze of the unknowing visitor and the local. She is, at once, neither inside nor outside of Europe in her writing, rather she occupies multiple subject positions.

78 Odile Heynders, *Writers as public intellectuals. Literature, celebrity, democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 55.

79 Jessica L., Wienhold-Brokish, *The double bind of 1989: reinterpreting space, place, and identity in postcommunist women's literature* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010),[PhD dissertation], 40-1.

3 The problem of representation in writing

This section discusses the problematic use of representation in Drakulić and Liiceanu's life writings. By employing representation as a narrative strategy the two writers reiterate a binary understanding of a positive West and a poor underdeveloped East. In doing so, both Liiceanu and Drakulić subscribe to a familiar pattern of Orientalism which, in the specific eastern European space becomes something more specific – the internalisation of Otherness. As already discussed in Chapter III, Milica Bakić-Hayden termed the process whereby east Europeans internalised "Eastern Europe" as Otherness as "nesting Orientalism". By considering it necessary to 'give voice', narrate, or represent people the writer assumes they are incapable of speaking for themselves. In Orientalist writing, readers are not granted direct access to the language, register and vocabulary; rather, they receive an approximation of these, mediated by the narrator's choices. The problem here is the implicit framing of these individuals and their experiences as invisible or silent. Under a selected interpretative framework the true protagonists of the stories are regarded as incapable of speaking for themselves, rendering them impotent or somehow lacking. For instance, the everyday heroes of socialist hardship, portrayed in Drakulić's writing, are easy to identify with. However, these characters are constructed by Drakulić. Readers do not have direct access to the experience of the underprivileged, uneducated rural Yugoslav people. Their so-called knowledge of them is mediated by Drakulić, an educated urban pluri-lingual cosmopolitan. Similarly, Liiceanu hints at events and characters, but the reader cannot establish with certainty the reliability of this information. The author-narrator, Liiceanu transfers his specific experience and projects it upon his characters. The narrator-creator claims the right and privilege to construct, legitimize and own interpretations of peoples' lives. The narrative form and choices made by the writer-narrator produce an image of the communist subject that is the narrator's creation. In a similar manner to Orientalist depictions the communist subject is constituted as 'Other' whose interpretation of experience depends on the

position the narrator takes. Readers cannot know whether that experience is authentic insofar as it truthfully depicts real-life accounts. It remains unclear "whose stories and experiences these accounts depict really. Speaking for and speaking to, are not always clearly distinguished."[80]

From this perspective the writer stands in a privileged position given their status of having an education that grants them the chance to participate from a favoured position in a public debate that shapes what and how the past is shaped and retold for future generations. The fact that both writers are in a privileged position, by having a voice and an audience, distances them from the very realities they wish to represent. Their experience, socio-political status and position provide an understanding that may be quite different to the perspective of those for whom they wish to speak. In this manner the war and real experiences lived by the real protagonists are effaced and substituted by a vision of either dissidents or elites who occupy a different social group. There is a real danger of appropriation of experiences that the narrator's voice simply cannot properly capture. On the subject of representation Liiceanu takes the view that writers, himself included, are endowed with the gift to give shape to a universal human experience. He writes that:

> There is ... a category of people that come to say certain things that are 'beyond words'. They say them for others ... assuming that their words will reach others, will touch their hearts and change them. Their words 'say everything', their words are magnificent, their strength is enormous, their spoken truth and the splendour of their speech take our breath away.[81]

For Liiceanu the diary form is a forum through which the writer can effectively speak for his fellows based on a commonality of experience.[82] In his view the diary has, what Liiceanu terms, "eschatological" value. That is, hope in the possibility that the diary, as a confession, can save the confessor:

80 Heynders, *Writers as public intellectuals,* 57.
81 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 104-5.
82 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 298-9.

> The principle of the diary is that of a confession (I reach myself by confessing myself to me) and the self-discovery of the person reading my confession (I help you reach yourself through me). I offer myself to me, but I am actually offering myself to you. The outcome is an extended Self in which "I" and "you", previously strangers, come so much closer that we both save ourselves: I reconcile with myself by reaching you, you find yourself by finding me thus reconcile with yourself. From a diary one finds that people reach full communion without even knowing it, that in the depths of their being they are identical or similar.[83]

Liiceanu writes from the position of homogeneous universal experience of Man rather than a plurality of experiences in the same environment.

Drakulić draws on her own life experience to explore the idea of Europe. She writes about the shared ideas and beliefs of her generation who grew up under communism ignorant of the details of World War Two, including the spread of communism, and their parents' participation in it. She sketches scenes of the everyday and individual life stories from the former communist bloc to offer insights to Western audiences unaccustomed to the cultures of the region and lacking detailed information about it. Drakulić brings to the fore alternative or marginal stories that usually remained silent. Representing the voice of others and underscoring polyphony she creates "contesting perspectives on the history of the present and in doing so inviting audiences to critically reflect on their own responsibility and historical knowledge"[84] Reflecting on her choice to use the pronoun "we" Drakulić writes:

> "Am I representing someone – a group, a party, a state? No, I am not. Am I appointed by someone? Not that I know of. Am I aware that other people think like me, and subconsciously identifying with them, even though I don't know them? No. So where do these pronouns come from, and whom do they represent? Clearly, in the context of this book, 'we' and 'us' mean the people of ex-communist countries, and as I am one of them I believe I can justify using the first-person plural to describe our common experience."[85]

83 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 339-40.
84 Heynders, *Writers as public intellectuals,* 58.
85 Drakulić, *Café Europa,* 1-2

When Drakulić inserts her story into a community based on commonality of experience she suggests that the meaning individuals give to their experience is the same. A pluralist perspective is lacking here. In her desire to "translate" the hopes and disappointments of eastern European people to the West she homogenizes a plurality of experiences. Claiming to speak for east Europeans she writes: "For east Europeans the name 'Europe' is always somewhere else where there is 'plenitude: food, cars, light, everything – a kind of festival of colours, diversity, opulence, beauty', in sum: a 'Europe too bright too be real"[86]

Both Drakulić and Liiceanu participate in a process that reiterates a binary understanding of West and East with their projections of Otherness on an imagined "Eastern Europe". In "Cafe Europa" Drakulić reiterates the perception, from the periphery, of a positive, developed, civilized, well-off and superior West in stark contrast to an East that is united by ugliness and chaos,"typical" of socialist and postsocialist societies. The tension and ambivalence at the heart of Drakulić's writing arises from striving for emancipation from an externally-imposed definition, while at the same time attempting to reach a stable identity. The "Eastern Europe" and its people in Drakulić's writing at times appears gloomy, sad and backward, a place no one would like to go or belong. In "Cafe Europa" is a tour, of eastern Europe for Western audiences. The narrator guides readers through communist societies. No one smiles at you and if by chance they do, you notice they have bad teeth; yet another allusion to poverty and backwardness.

In the short story "In Zoe's bathroom" Drakulić makes poignant observations about the communist nomenklatura, their appointment to bureaucratic positions, the rich resources they have access to and their poor taste. Drakulić tends to equate the communist regime, poverty, backwardness and "Eastern Europe". Lack of hygiene and poor taste are markers of culture in this text ascribed to "East Europeans". Survival strategies and compromise are interpreted by Drakulić in cultural terms

86 Drakulić, *Café Europa,* 12.

rather than contextually and socially, as if there were something wrong in eastern Europe's cultural matrix that produced the ugly realities the narrator observes. In "Still Stuck in the Mud" Drakulić takes an even gloomier view. She contrasts a sterile and orderly Stockholm, a symbol of Western superiority, to the unruly and loud peripheries of socialist urban landscapes in eastern Europe. She uses mud as a metaphor to describe this eastern European unruliness. For Drakulić mud in Eastern European cities:

> returns to haunt you, the ghost of your peasant origins ... I felt as if I were plunged into some kind of a primordial soup, dragged back to the origins of life, dissolving into basic elements, so primeval did that mud look to me, so omnipresent, so inevitable ... It seems like a sort of plot: from time to time the soil rises from beneath us, just to remind us where we come from ... the soil is what we want to forget – the stench, the poverty[87]

Drakulić describes accelerated urbanization in socialist societies, and its failure to produce an urban population. In her writing, the rural population who moved to the cities as part of the process of industrialisation are a symbol of backwardness. Drakulić views this process as unfinished development. She attributes medieval traits to everything connected to rural life and its inhabitants while valuing urban life and its commodities. The story presents a unilateral view of progress, development and modernity. However, Drakulić remains ambivalent. Despite deeming village life, its habits and inhabitants as inferior she admits that rural life helped individuals survive the devastating conditions of the poor socialist economy. Her mixed feelings create a state of unease that remains unresolved.

Combining her voice and feelings with those of an imagined interlocutor Drakulić writes:

> your life has been changed by the city: you are a sophisticated urban person, you have a car and you walk on asphalt. Except when it rains, when the mud comes out to remind you. There you are, with one foot still stuck in the mud.[88]

87 Drakulić, *Café Europa*, 199-200.
88 Drakulić, *Café Europa*, 203.

It is in stories such as “Still Stuck in the Mud” that Drakulić's ambivalent and arbitrary use of multiple voices becomes problematic. She represents a wide variety of experiences and viewpoints, but compromises the validity of such perspectives by confusing her own voice with that of her characters. Thus it is unclear whether the opinions and feelings she expresses are her own or whether they belong to her characters. Does she wish to suggest these are the experiences of most east Europeans? This narrative strategy is not credible and threatens to destabilize the content that is communicated. Because the narrator herself was not part of the migration from the rural to the urban environment, she is not telling this story from her own life. But, this cannot be the reflections of those who lived through this experience. Their stories are recorded elsewhere, especially in oral histories.

Drakulić's privileged perspective is apparent in her stories. The markers she attributes positive values to – modern urban aesthetics, precise notions of what hygiene is and is not, good taste and poor habits – are all value judgments that attribute lesser value to rural life and to east European tradition. Drakulić cannot find a safe position for herself between her belonging to eastern Europe and the negative features she attributes to it. Her solution is to speak from the position of the narrator who instructs her readers how to interpret modern urban and rural life.

Drakulić’s shift from first person singular to plural in her autobiographical writing suggests that the feelings and experiences happen in an intimate space between Drakulić the narrator and the protagonists of the story. However, from what is known of Drakulić’s biography this is not what happened therefore what Drakulić claims to be a shared experience is in fact a mere strategy of identification in the narration. What Drakulić tries to perform in these situations runs the risk of discrediting her own accounts because she claims to have observed and witnessed the events she is

narrating when this cannot be true.[89] Drakulić uses the technique of intermingling of voices as she conveys the experience of homelessness in the following quote. She writes:

> With no firm ground beneath my feet I stood at the centre of the city realizing that this was what being a refugee meant, seeing the content of your life slowly leaking out, as if from a broken vessel (...) But at that moment, at the thought of becoming an exile, I understood that it would take me another lifetime to find my place in a foreign world and that I simply didn't have one to spare.[90]

In quotes such as this Drakulić does not make clear what her own circumstance was in real life events. The problem consists not in the fact that Drakulić empathises with the characters and experiences she narrates, but in her claim to shared-ness, in her allusion that she too, Slavenka Drakulić, went through the same situations. The problem is that this claim is invalidated by Drakulić's biography. She never was a war refugee or an exile so her claim to have been one is a problematic narrative strategy. While Drakulić experienced war and marginalisation after the fall of Yugoslavia she was in a very different position than the characters she narrates. There is a considerable gap between the Drakulić's and the other protagonists' situations. When Drakulić left Croatia it was a matter of choice, not a life-threatening situation. There is a lack of credibility in what Drakulić's privileged situation and distress which she retells in the narration. There is a strong contrast between the exiled by choice, Drakulić, and those who have no choice. There is an underlying assumption that identification were entirely a question of choice or point of view. I suggest that this narrative strategy suggests Drakulić views subjects in postcommunism as incapable of correctly interpreting their own life experience because they somehow lack "a cool and rational insight into our history".[91] Moreover Renata Jambrešić Kirin suggests that "Drakulić's brave capturing of the *storytelling right* ... in the name of her allegedly representative socialist experience – could be also interpreted as an ignorant Westerner's negation of the ethnic, religious, cultural and

89 For a critical reading of dilemmas on issues of authority, competence and "correctness" of interpretations of war experiences with a focus on the question of "ethnographic truth" in the former Yugoslavia by Croat writers see Renata, Jambrešić Kirin,'Personal Narratives on War: A Challenge to Women's Essays and Ethnography in Croatia', *ELO*, 5 (1999): 73–98.

90 Drakulić, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), 33-4.

91 Drakulić, *Café Europa,* 152.

social differences of more than 100 million women in post-communist Europe.”[92] Such discursive strategies in writing run the risk of mis-describing the experiences of the real protagonists.
Use of and identification with multiple voices is an effective strategy for creating a sense of understanding and empathy with the reader. While the strategy has its advantages in translating complex experiences to an un-knowledgeable audience, it does present problems. In their desire to bring alternative experiences to the fore Liiceanu and Drakulić reinforce a binary understanding of the “West” and the “East”. The “West” is represented as a space of prosperity where eastern Europeans aim to go while “East”, the writers’ home, is represented as a backward space where “mud” comes back to haunt people.

4 Symbolic geography: Dreaming of “Europe” and escaping “Eastern Europe”

In this final section I discuss the manner in which space, place and notions of home(land) are conceptualized in Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts and examine, in particular, the double bind of simultaneously belonging to and rejecting the nation. The tension between the desire to belong and to reject is a ‘double bind’. For instance, belonging to or re-claiming the nation is not easy for many individuals forced into exile or hiding under socialist regimes. Similarly, rejecting attachment to the nation in a post-regime context can be equally difficult. The difficulty in the latter case lies in the fact that individuals in the post-situation go through processes of reckoning with the recent past. In the specific case of the ex-socialist east European dealing with the past often means addressing enduring legacies of epistemic domination, “nesting Orientalism”, internalised Otherness and competing identity markers. In this context life writing can both address and destabilize easy understandings of “Europe” and question them from the perspective of its internal Others.
According to Ioana Luca and Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, authors of life-writing oftentimes confirm, challenge or erase borders within the inner world of their texts. Their writing is always a critical

92 Jambrešić Kirin,‘Personal Narratives on War’, 82.

engagement with Europe.[93] Writers from eastern Europe usually address the conflict of being simultaneously drawn to, but rejected by an ideal West. As already noted Norman Manea describes the simultaneous acceptance and rejection, as well as the solutions writers initiate to reconcile the conflict. This is what Manea calls coming to terms with one's “spiritual geography”[94].

4.1 Home as Shame. Motherland and Fatherland

The discussion now turns to the manner in which Gabriel Liiceanu constructs his vision of homeland. Focusing on this concept highlights the tensions between belonging to “Eastern Europe” and dreaming of “Europe”. “Home” is conceptualised by Liiceanu as a space to which one wishes to belong, a space from which one is expelled, and a space one refuses to be part of. In the first instance, the concept or idea of “home” is Liiceanu’s space for himself. The second instance is the “home” of Romania during socialism, it is a space in which Liiceanu cannot recognise any of the values he grew up with because the cultural traditions were suppressed and forbidden. Finally, “home” is backward socialist “Eastern Europe” that Liiceanu simultaneously rejects and reinforces. Liiceanu's notion of home is constructed on two different, albeit complementary, ideas. The first, is home as motherland. The second is home as fatherland. This dual notion of home is based on Liiceanu's perception of the communist regime as an illegitimate historical episode in the history of his society. For him, ideology, political tradition, history and culture become enmeshed within a single category of understanding. Thus his constructed notion of home – between an idealised Motherland and an imagined Fatherland (“patria mica”) – is an ideal notion of home. His reading of “home” conceals an ambivalence. His notion of Fatherland, ‘patria mica’, consists in an idealization of the values of Inter-War Romania. His notion of Motherland is attributable to his neighbourhood

93 Ioana Luca and Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, ‘Life Writing Trajectories in Post-1989 Eastern Europe’, *The European Journal of Life Writing*, Vol.II, (2013), T1–9.
94 Manea, *Curierul de Est: dialog cu Edward Kanterian* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010), 341.

home of Cotroceni. The intersection of Fatherland and Motherland allows for the fantasy of his ideal.

4.1.1 Home as Motherland – Cotroceni neighbourhood

The fantasy of an ideal home, a manifestation of his desire to belong to a pre-communist tradition, is apparent in Liiceanu's idealization of Cotroceni. Liiceanu suggests that Cotroceni is one of the few neighbourhoods that still:

> keep within them the traces of the nineteenth century or the traces of the interwar period. They [the neighbourhoods] attune me *physically* to those epochs of our history in which I recognize myself, in which I am not in pain as a Romanian.[95]

Pre-communist Cotroceni was a historic neighbourhood of Bucharest built around the Cotroceni palace. The neighbourhood housed the upper middle class strata and high-ranking military personnel catering to the affairs of the palace. By claiming an association with and belonging to pre-republic Romania Liiceanu is claiming recognition with the values and practices associated with another political regime and epoch. He contrasts this lost world with the newly-built neighbourhood of the 1960s and 1970s high urbanisation era. To Liiceanu this vast urban re-organisation crushed, effaced and disfigured both the city and its inhabitants. The regime changed the city's appearance so that its buildings, its churches, its monuments announced the death of the old world and the arrival of a new order. The pain for Liiceanu consists in losing the old "face" of the city and rejecting its new appearance.

Liiceanu experiences the destruction of the city's architecture and historic neighbourhoods as a form of expropriation of his own country and as a loss of belonging to a community.[96] The world he

95 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre. 27 de interviuri 1990-2011. Oare ne putem apăra prin cuvinte?* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 371.
96 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre,* 371.

and his family belonged to was erased as acquaintances and entire families were either humiliated at home, imprisoned or chose exile. In *Estul naivităţilor noastre. 27 de interviuri 1990-2011. Oare ne putem apăra prin cuvinte?* Liiceanu uses the city and his neighborhood as a metaphor for his life, the loss of his origin and past values. This idea can be found in Liiceanu's descriptions of his homeland as hijacked, as a "concentration camp for an entire people" during the communist regime.[97] He explains that under the communist regime homeland became the place from which to escape, as it ceased be one's home and became someone else's home, in fact "their" home. He explains the feeling of losing one's home as a loss of connection to a territory. Once that territory is destroyed the homeland is stolen.[98]

Having lost a physical landscape that reminded him of Romania's past Liiceanu finds refuge in a miniature version of an idealised past, his childhood neighbourhood. For Liiceanu to claim belonging to that neighbourhood, a house or an apartment block was a marker of identity and differentiation. To claim belonging to an "old world" neighbourhood essentially meant a refusal to be part of the newly-emerging socialist class with its aesthetics, taste and practices. It could be said that Liiceanu's attachment and idealisation of the neighbourhood Cotroceni may be read as an attempt to contain and salvage an idealised version of the self. It is a refusal of the present, of the status quo and a projection of an ideal self into the past. This physical space Liiceanu calls home is described as a refuge within a world of enmity, a *Heimsuchung*, a place one longs for and strives for, a place in tune with one's manner of being in the world. Liiceanu's vision of home in this case is maternal, a "motherland", a notion quite different from what is usually invoked in the Romanian language by the word "patrie"[99]. What determines this particular quality of his vision is its association with "perfect protection", a fortress capable of withstanding the forces happening

97 Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 66.
98 Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele,* 66.
99 From the French "patrie".

outside. Later, when he makes the choice to return to Romania and refuses exile he would return to his neighbourhood the place that formed the emotional capital of his life. He writes:

> I was haunted for a long time to go back to that: the painful desire of going back. It is wonderful to have a nostalgic capital because that means that at least once in your lifetime there was a place of happiness that you can mentally evoke or aspire to go back to ... 'the citadel in Cotroceni'. This place essentially meant an escape from the time in which we had to live, it made me bear more easily that which Eliade called "the terror of history"... The Cotroceni neighbourhood has a quality that makes it unique among the places in Bucharest: it closes in on itself ... Cotroceni cannot be conquered by the city ... the rest of the city – with its ugliness, its noise, its rudeness acquired after the war, with its institutions as symbols of a fatal power – magically vanishes.[100]

4.1.2 Home as fatherland - "patria mica"

The second home in Liiceanu's writing is understood by the narrator as a fatherland, what he terms "patria mica", the small fatherland. His writing on this subject is ambivalent. He defines his fatherland as inferior and backward. Coming back home is always a shock, he is always uneasy, because when he returns to Romania during late socialism Liiceanu sees hideous mud houses, crude poverty, corruption, illegality, "deformed faces, toothless Fellini-style mouths, dead gazes, torn clothes."[101] Romania was "ugly, hideous, in pain."[102] He reports experiencing the history of his country as a personal drama. Liiceanu becomes aware of viewing his place of origin through an external gaze. Faced with the changes, origin becomes a source of shame and difficulty for the writer. He feels destined to travel the "world wrapped in Romania's many layers of shame... Seen from afar we were all suffused in the same aura of barbarity."[103]

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100 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre,* 371-2.
101 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 75-6
102 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 75-6.
103 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 154.

Liiceanu uses the idea of "small fatherland" to reclaim belonging to a home that does not produce feelings of shame. His notion of "small fatherland" is not a celebration of nativisim, or "protochronism", the Romanian version of nativism.[104] Despite Liiceanu's reinforcement of the problematic Eurocentric notion of an alleged east European backwardness, his strategy of belonging with reference to a "small fatherland" can be interpreted as at least an effort to break the binary of West-East. His solution to inhabiting a conflictual space is to construct a homeland that is defined spiritually.[105] With the "small fatherland" solution Liiceanu locates his "small fatherland" within a wider European tradition in which he can forge a spiritual home.[106] He envisions this "small fatherland" from a position of agency:

> Every time I am desperate I say to myself: 'It is my country too, not only theirs!' This 'mine' is overwhelming because it comes from a great depth and goes down very far back in time. It can fix you in a place even when the inferno sets itself there. This 'unique' of mine that envelops the first part of your life ... It is terrible when people are forced to leave their country. They especially do so when they feel history as terror when the existence of their country becomes a tumour.[107]

This description of Romania through the imagery of dirt, poverty and crudeness reflects a Eurocentric view of the world. Romania is represented as an imagined "Third World". It is the result of a complicated Eurocentricity in which the gaze belongs to an internal Other, it is one's own process of othering. Liiceanu distances himself from this "Third World" seeing it as alien and belonging to another civilization. In order to reconcile the tension of being othered and becoming an agent of Eurocentrism himself Liiceanu constructs an impossible image of his home in eastern Europe. He invents the concept of "profound Romania", a land invisible to an unknowing gaze, but experienced by a community of insiders. He writes:

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104 For a critical reading of protochronism see Lucian Boia (chapter one), 'History, Ideology, Mythology' in *History and Myth*, 31–82.
105 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 216-7.
106 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 216-7.
107 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre*, 351

> This world in which I was born with its trains and wretched train stations, with its villages in the Bărăgan, with state driveways on which one could encounter shabby horse-driven carriages drunken bicycle drivers, women pushing worn strollers, cattle and sheep, old ladies carrying twigs on their bent backs, all this life that belonged to 'profound Romania' that had nothing idyllic about it – I could see it without sensing it in its immeasurable all-encompassing misery. It was mine, glued onto me, mystified and rendered invisible by its very implied-ness. It enveloped me and I loved it with that 'enveloping love' that accompanies the reality one is part of … all fell as a thick drapery of smoke over my gaze and over my comprehension. Seen from the cotton walls of my life, Romania – no doubt about it – was no Mexico: not even in the manner I had known it, thrown in communism and by the dust of History.[108]

Liiceanu's analysis of his homeland from the perspective of Eurocentrism reveals a society lacking in morals and failing to meet Western standards of civilisation. Its people appear ignorant, backward, lacking in intelligence; they are inferior. He gazes at his own region and its people from an external perspective. The Romanian people appear incapable of "perceiving immorality", lacking in proper judgment and reasoning as measured on a moral scale. He views them as lacking, as giving in to historical change rather than fighting back. This lack of heroism on the part of his own people Liiceanu takes as an insult and is a source of shame by association for the writer:

> they continue to eat whatever food history had served them previously. Cold, unheated, rotten. They don't care that, at least symbolically speaking, they had a revolution, that history suffered an indigestion and that the characters now parading on the scene were nothing else than the vomit of earlier times.[109]

Liiceanu regards Romania's gravest "sin" as its fall from grace, from the Paradise of culture which Eastern European societies are incapable of understanding and supporting. Liiceanu decries the state of "national culture" in his homeland in a language that recalls early twentieth century theories of European superiority. In his writings, culture takes the role of religion and elites are the guardians of such values:

> Our culture is weak because – philosophically at least – it cannot 'sustain'. The original act of creation, once fulfilled, cannot be perpetuated because there is no one to take charge and execute continuation-related rituals ...Romanians do not honour their god

108 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 74-5.
109 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 67-8.

> and, because they ignore it, it becomes outdated before it can even bear fruit. We have not known cultural decadence in philosophy, a fact which presupposes a worn-out cosmos that is tired of its long history, because we never reached the point at the end of a path ... In our case, philosophers die out of lack of posterity, out of carelessness and ritualistic callousness, our of the inability of descendants to echo and reiterate.[110]

In these descriptions Liiceanu likens eastern Europe to a slum. As noted earlier he judges eastern Europe against an externally-produced knowledge of the "East". The region and its people are taken as an atemporal continuous essence that lack the ability to look at themselves. In this example from his writing the gaze cannot be reversed, the objects of the external gaze cannot turn into the makers of their own lives. Romanian people are powerless, incapable of positive deeds and lack reason. In short, they lack all the attributes of personhood. He writes:

> The world I came back to ... welcomed me as a slum, a slum understood as an aesthetic category of Romanian society. What is a slum understood in this manner? In history decisions are made, in a slum decisions are postponed. In history destinies are met, in a slum people fight and then reconcile. In history deeds are done and there is progress, in a slum everything is a fuss, yet the world stands still. History has its own discourse in which things are known and uttered clearly while in the slum rumours, gossip and jokes reign supreme. In history public space is solemn and can generate an 'objective spirit', in the slum the border between public and private fades as casualness can undermine the most sacred state institutions.[111]

Despite his indignation and participation in Othering eastern Europe, Liiceanu does manage to craft a space for himself. This space, termed by him 'patria mica', is a space in which he constructs a personalised vision of eastern Europe as home. This is an ambivalent home, uneasy, never fully accepted or taken as one's own, always marked by a movement of acceptance and rejection.

I turn now to Slavenka Drakulić whose writing on Europe, "European-ness", Western and Eastern Europe is a curious mix of both reinforcement of binary notions of inherently good West – bad East and a rejection of the legacy of a constructed "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism". There is certainly

110 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 145-6.
111 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 217-8.

an effort on her part aimed at emancipation from such a gaze. However, this effort is still limited to the inherited vocabulary of division. Drakulić aims and desires autonomy for eastern Europeans, but she still remains confined to a binary understanding. She desires for a comospolitan Europe, but her understanding of "Europe" remains problematic because she still defines "Europe" as an eastern European: idealized and as a realm of wealth.

Drakulić strives to translate a nuanced east European landscape, a varied universe of experience of the peoples and cultures of eastern Europe and their transformation over time to both a domestic and a Western audience. Her writing proposes to affirm an eastern European identity freed from hegemonic discourses, to show the possibility of defining oneself as an east European in an autonomous way rather than continuing to dream of belonging to an ideal Europe. As a narrator Drakulić turns both into a visitor and a local, a guide for a Western audience, looking at the natives, while allowing herself to be looked upon. She visits familiar places while at the same time distancing herself from those very places. Drakulić walks a thin line between spectator and spectacle.

Drakulić's writing takes readers on a voyage either back in time or through the territories of eastern Europe in an effort to reconcile the land with its history. Travelling through and writing from the various territories of eastern Europe enable a gaze liberated from a restrictive or confining national definition of the self in a manner similar to Andrzej Stasiuk's own writing. For east Europeans however this is more a desire than an accomplished state of fact. However, her narratives work both ways: while she does articulate two distinct communities – Eastern and Western – and her effort is aimed at erasing the divide between the two, she upholds those very distinctions.

“Cafe Europa” is an excellent example of the ambivalence of struggle for emancipation and the reiteration of a binary understanding. Drakulić sets up a tension within the title of the book, a conflict between the idea of “Europa” on the one hand, associated with transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, a form of belonging to something other than the nation, and the existence of a gap between the category of a West and an East on the other hand. The title of the book suggests both a desire for unity, a dream of a common home “Europe” while the stories themselves point towards a division of “Europe”. The desire for “Europe” is played out on a terrain of fragmentation. In all the territories Drakulić visits in the East of the continent she encounters, in one way or another, “Europe” as a projection of a desire for stability, security, wealth or simply the opposite of what people’s lives are. However this common desire stands in contrast to the gloomy background of east European territories where the fantasy is constructed. The title itself represents a common thread in all the stories of the book. It is in the name of Western European cities given of modern cafes and shops in eastern Europe. ‘Cafe Europa’ thus reveals both a reinforcement of notions and physical borders between a West and an East, but also hints at the dream of deleting such borders. Drakulić sometimes communicates the end of communism as an end of imprisonment that enables east Europeans to finally travel and start re-seeing themselves as Europeans. Drakulić proposes a new way of imagining the “east European condition” a hybrid form of identification liberated from the socialist and national. The pattern of travel can be seen as a solution to the limitations of physical limitation such as border. Travelling becomes a desire to erase physical and political borders off the map of Europe, a desire for a borderless Europe. The writer-narrator of “Cafe Europa” tells her readers that they too can become emancipated and free themselves. She reports on east Europeans' desire to belong to this ideal vision of Europe, a desire that manifests itself in the psychical environment of cities throughout the east:

> In Prague, Zagreb, Bratislava or Ljubljana and other Eastern European cities, towns - even villages - you can eat, drink, sleep, dress or entertain yourself in places with Western European and, to a lesser extent, American names.[112]

In “On the quality of wall paint in Eastern Europe” Drakulić tells the story of the re-fashioning of Zagreb as a pretext to discuss the dangers of post-socialist dynamics. Drakulić celebrates no victory after the fall of Yugoslavia and the wars that ensued. She uses the metaphor of facade to reflect on what is hiding behind the newly-painted buildings in the city of Zagreb. This is more than a mere spatial consideration. Bringing to the fore the falsity of the facade she symbolically invokes the image of the mask, of faces that deceive and conceal the ugly and painful truth. She sees a dangerous trend before her. The bright paint used to hide the past is interpreted by her as a concerted effort on the part of her fellow countrymen to forget their recent past and choose lies over truth. Here she invokes a strong image of the eastern Europeans inferiority complex. Eastern Europeans' effort to beautify their space strikes Drakulić as an effort to conceal and deny the Self. Being “Eastern European” here is an identity-marker that constantly forces the self to become something different, to adapt and alter the incomplete, fractured Self to an external gaze. She writes:

> We citizens felt that there was something offensive, even humiliating in the way the change was done ... What hurt was this distinction between 'the world' and us. I know that the city fathers did not invent this distinction - we did. … We ourselves make it very often, and perhaps this really is the image that we have of ourselves. But we used to keep it inside, as our dirty little secret, and certainly, we wouldn't like others to think the same – foreigners especially. To see the secret discovered, to see it materialize, openly admitted, was humiliating in a way. If they are 'the world', then what are we? What is dividing us; where is that invisible border? In us, in our low self-esteem, in our history and our poverty, the system we live in? What makes us feel so different that we have to look up at the world, with a constant feeling that the world is looking down on us?[113]

In texts such as this Drakulić’s writing suggests that identification is a voluntary process as if exiting the “east European” condition were a matter of awareness and choice Drakulić seems to

112 Drakulić, *Café Europa*, 8.
113 Drakulić, *How we survived communism and even laughed,* 160-1.

suggest that east Europeans are in a position to alter their forms of identification and successfully communicate those refashioned forms of identification in a context free of constrictions and limitations. This is a utopian aim as Drakulić transfers her own circumstance and transnational position to the very different circumstance of her subjects in writing hoping that there were such as a thing as an empowering external gaze onto one's own circumstance[114]

In "Bosnia, or What Europe Means to Us,", a short story in "Cafe Europa", Drakulić appears to reach a final destination in "Cafe Europa". She starts "Cafe Europa" in Vienna and ends up in a Bosnian refugee family's dining room in Sweden. In the story of a family displaced from Bosnia to Sweden Drakulić conveys the tension between the need to belong and displacement. This is foremost the story of east Europeans who dreamed of and believed in the notion of a "good and noble Europe" that failed to materialise in their time of need. The story tracks their disappointment with their dream of Europe and contrasts it to the reality they were forced to confront: exile, loss, abandonment of the familiar and not being able to make a new home in the real Western Europe. In this story Drakulić gives voice to her characters by imagining the empowered position of an east European: "It was us, the Eastern European, who invented 'Europe', constructed it, dreamed it, called upon it. This Europe is a myth created by us"[115] This is not a description of what occurred in eastern Europe, it is the narrator's desire to inspire emancipation in her readers. As a narrator-creator inside the universe of her book Drakulić's powerful position suggests that east Europeans can and should claim the right to self-definition instead of functioning as passive receivers.**[116]**

Drakulić uses the story of "People From the Three Borders" as an example of a transnational multicultural home. For her, home and self-identification are closely connected. This story is emblematic of Drakulić's strong political claim that reimagining the self and the collective after the

114 Wienhold-Brokish, *The double bind of 1989,* 206.
115 Drakulić, *Café Europa,* 212.
116 Wienhold-Brokish, *The double bind of 1989,* 207.

turmoils of socialism, disintegration, war, hatred, fear and nationalism is possible. The region in Croatia called Istria is a border region historically influenced by Slovenia, Italy and Croatia. Its people are multilingual and do not claim exclusive belonging to any the three cultural heritages in Istria. The people do not define themselves as either, Slovenian, Italian or Croatia. There is no single national identity. They are simply Istrian. She fixes this territory into a complicated geography. The act of naming and positioning it on a real map is not arbitrary or meaningless. By carrying out this act Drakulić makes a claim to multiple forms of belonging and cultural heritages and her individual power to choose. By locating Istria she suggests that the very act of identification and belonging is an act of will and choice. She identifies with Istrians on the question of identification and asks herself the same question even though she is unable to find, initially, a simple answer. The writer identifies with the pressure to define, to categorize, to belong and to prove one's national affiliation. In Drakulić's story language is not complicated and does not create problems or divisions between people. On the contrary, languages and dialects exist naturally and are an integral part of people's lives. She writes:

> Istria is a territory of ten distinctly different Slavic dialects and four dialects of Italian origin. Yet... they switch languages with no visible effort, understanding each other perfectly. This mixture of languages and the ease with which the people slip from one into the other is characteristic of life here. People understand each other on a deeper level. They do not make problems out of their differences; it is others who do that.[117]

Her writing makes a strong case for finding ways to identify not only in Istria, but throughout the European continent. Through this story she alludes to the often overlooked territories that are also part of Europe: the lands at the borders, the multiples territories of Europe that elude easy national definitions and that manage, despite national rhetoric, to sustain their own complex realities. Here Drakulić makes a powerful statement suggesting that identification can indeed break free from past definitions and allow people to create categories of their own. She uses "Istria" as a metaphor for a complex Eastern European space with a multicultural tradition that resists fitting into one category,

117 Drakulić, *Café Europa,* 163.

be it national, ethnic or linguistic. She offers and constructs the example of Istria, and the difficulty of its inhabitants to fit nicely into one box, to convey her own personal message on the subject: resistance to ascribed or imposed external definitions of what the Self should be in a given context. This may, however, give rise to a problematic as resistance falls short in the face of dis-empowered subjects who unlike the narrator, do not have an audience to speak to.

5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I discussed articulations of subjectivity in an alternative framework than the one traditionally discussed by the Totalitarian Paradigm in eastern Europe. Under that Paradigm, subjectivities in the east European communist and postcommunist space were analyzed within a simplistic triad of victims – oppressors – accomplices effectively screening out a myriad of subject-positions. I placed and discussed articulations of subjectivity not in either of the two extremes, indoctrination or resistance, but in the "grey area" or in between. "Antipolitical privatism", dissimulation and instances of divided selves were discussed as expressions of positioning in the discursive space of the "grey zone".

Life writing is a performative act that can enable the self to recuperate individuality through the empowering act of speech. I highlighted the problem of using multiple subject-positions as strategies of identification with other narrative characters and how representation distorts the experiences being narrated and undermines the credibility of the author's voice by claiming shared experiences between the author and the stories of the people being narrated.

Finally, looking at belonging in a symbolic geography of Europe I have argued that Gabriel Liiceanu's and Slavenka Drakulić's texts present an ambivalent movement of both reinforcement of

binary West-East Eurocentric notions, as well as destabilising the idea of a single monolithic east European condition. After the experience of loss and displacement both writers strive to imagine and create a symbolic home to which they can belong. Drakulić' does this in her imagining of Istria as a transnational multilingual home at the border of three nations and Liiceanu in his “small fatherland” or “profound Romania”, a cultural spiritual construct outside of the political realm.

Chapter VI Reading Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu. Writing about Memory in Eastern Europe

In this chapter I discuss the problem of east European memory in the life writing of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu. The chapter is organised into three sections. The first section explores whether a united European memory can be achieved.[1] In this section I explain Western and Eastern memory and how they are used in political and public debates. Historical events experienced by people in Western and Eastern Europe have shaped quite different memories of Europe. In other words, Western and Eastern Europeans remember common historic events differently. National elites constructed normative official memory and histories. These official memories do not reflect the many types of memory as indicated in a number of surveys.[2] The second section discuses Gabriel Liiceanu's engagement with memory. I argue that his representation of the past focuses on the trope of occupation, victimhood and trauma. The section ends with a discussion on Liiceanu's idealization of the interwar period and nostalgia when dealing with the past. The third section discusses Drakulić's approach to memory. She uses a different strategy to Liiceanu for remembering and representing the recent past. Unlike Liiceanu, Drakulić does not demonize the communist regime and its exponents. In her stories the socialist past is a man-made project that her fellow countrymen built and participated in. By representing communism as an historical episode in a museum display Drakulić both contains and condemns it. However, her distancing should not be read as a desire to forget. There is a discussion of Drakulić's writing on memory in relation to the Shoah and the war in ex-Yugoslavia to explore her commitment to individual and collective responsibility. As an eastern European Croat Drakulić's call to take

1 See ed. Malgorzata Pakier, Bo Stråth *A European Memory? Contested histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York/Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010) [Volume 6, Contemporary European History].

2 See Mihai Stelian Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past. The memory of communism between elitist cultural trauma and popular collective nostalgia', *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics,* 18, 1 (2015): 24–48

responsibility for involvement in crimes against the European Jewish community is a strong political statement, not least because it comes comes from and is directed to people who find confrontation with the past difficult.

1 Divided memory – Western versus Eastern – Hot versus Cold memory

The fall of socialist regimes in eastern Europe brought about a proliferation of personal memoirs which challenged some of the tenets of official memory narratives. Life writing, written by professional writers, public intellectuals and victims of communist persecution, are part of this reclaiming process. It is from the perspective of challenging national memory canons that I read Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu's life writing. Considering that life writing, testimonial/confessional/memorialistic writing participates in producing public memory from and on eastern Europe, Drakulić and Liiceanu’s memory writing offer alternative views within the larger debates.

Writing about and representing the recent past in eastern Europe is an act of power whereby the authors establish and offer their version of truth about the recent past. During the communist era in eastern Europe silencing political truths and historic memory was a form of oppression. After the fall of these regimes, recuperating memory and advancing one's own version on the truth about the recent past was a strategy for reclaiming lost individuality. As such semi-autobiographical and autobiographical works, memoirs, testimonials and life writing contributed to shaping official memory in the decisive post-regime decade. These texts sometimes function as anti-histories to officially-established national or “European” history. I discuss the roles memory writing has in eastern Europe and its role in forging problematic “communities of suffering” as ‘victimhood’. In eastern Europe “lieux de la mémoire”[3] (“places of memory”) play a role in identification of physical

3 See ed. Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard [Vol.1 1984, Vol. II, 1986, Vol. III 1992]).

places to facilitate commemoration of unrecognised past suffering. Kończal's work, *Provincializing memory studies: Polish approaches in the past and present* provides important insights into the proliferation of lieux de mémoire or memorials in Eastern Europe commemorating people who had suffered atrocities. For Kończal this process of memorialisation divided rather than unified communities.[4] Finally, I examine the possibilities that critical memory can offer in producing narratives of the recent past and empowering the future renewal of society.

After the Second World War European memory, as opposed to eastern or western memory, emerged in response to multiple efforts to rebuild the war-torn continent. Reaching common ground on the experience of the war was a difficult and ongoing process. Recognition of injustice did not come from the state, but emerged as the exclusive initiative of private individuals and victim associations claiming reparations for past injustice. A proper assessment of the damages and effects of antisemitism, fascism, institutionalized racism, pogroms, genocide and the Holocaust was a slow process. In the specific context of post WWII reconciliation, the creation of the European community and the symbolic peace between France and Germany the need to construct a unified European memory emerged. The Holocaust served as a negative foundational myth for a painful European unification. This strand in memory-making was a top-down process of memory creation, built on the principles of "Never again". What started as a demand for recognition of past suffering, injustice and illegality on the part of victims became part of the politics of memory production for the newly-built European community. In that narrative the Holocaust served as a symbol of barbarity relegated to a distant non-European category against which a victorious Europe had to unite.[5] The practical necessities of post-war rebuilding efforts took precedence over national, regional, group and individual memories that clashed with the Eurocentric narratives. Denial of the

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4 Kornelia Kończal, JoannaWawrzyniak, 'Provincializing memory studies: Polish approaches in the past and present', *Memory Studies*, 11, 4 (2018), 397.

5 See Tony Judt, Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the twentieth century* (London: Heinemann, 2012).

European origin of the Holocaust involved various layers of thinking. The first layer was denial of the role that racism and antisemitism played in envisioning a pure Aryan race. Second, was denial of the tradition of German imperial ambitions on the continent and the Volksgemeinschaft ("people's community") as the transnational incarnation of that ambition. The third layer included denial of the fact that it was Europeans who carried out the atrocities. Fourth this was a denial that genocide took place on European territory. Revealing the transnational and local dimensions of the Holocaust ran the risk of opening up past conflicts on the European continent. For this reason cultivating a "narrative of origins" was preferred because this "new" mainstream 'European' memory was something Europeans could unite around.[6]

The post-regime era witnessed an opening up of the space for memory and the emergence of a series of new narratives focused on East European memory. For instance, during the Cold War Western narratives of WWII and the Holocaust denied the collective suffering of entire groups in eastern Europe.[7] These groups of people, subsumed into an abstract category of "antifascists", were missing from the official Western European memory of Nazi aggression.[8] After the end of the Cold War and the fall of communist regimes in eastern Europe there was an explosion of memory related work. Part of this memory work was the phenomenon of "memory freezing" and censorship about the Second World War which came with socialist propaganda. This work introduced Western European audiences to the existence of an eastern version of the Gulag suppressed by communist oppression and mis-represented or absent from Western memory.[9] Further, Eastern Europeans

6 For a discussion on post-war European memory see ed. Laure Neumayer and Georges Mink, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

7 For a critical reading see ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak, *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books 2015).

8 Lagenbacher, E., 'Conclusion: A plea for an "intergovernmental" European memory in Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe', in ed. Langenbacher, et al., *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 214.

9 See Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: a history of the Soviet camps* (London: Penguin, 2004).

"remember" differently from one society to another, from one social group to another.[10] For instance, there are those who "remember" socialism in eastern Europe as an episode of deviated modernity.[11]

East-European personal memoirs challenge Western European representations and memories of the Holocaust, the Gulag and soviet hegemony. In *Political Correctness and Memories Constructed for Eastern Europe in Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, social psychologist Andrzej Nowak notes that governments, politicians, intellectuals and citizens were active in constructing an idealised European memory. This normative top-down politics of memory construction coming as it did only from the West reinforced a sense of lack of understanding, distancing and an additional sense of injustice on the part of east Europeans who proffered vernacular memory or alternatives histories. [12] Nowak argued that because vernacular and alternative memories threatened to disturb this idealised construction they were thus sanitised, marginalized and rendered politically incorrect. In short, the neglected stories coming from eastern Europe threatened the ideal of shared European identity.[13] Hence, Nowak argues that the process of memory construction discredits the very possibility of a reliable East European memory.[14]

Stories re-emerging from eastern Europe threaten the neat narrative of a united European memory. Some scholars have warned, there might even be an overload of memory, a "saturated memory" [15]

10 For a critical reading of "memory wars" in post Cold War Eastern Europe see Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, Julie Fedor, *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

11 For a primary source as an example see Andrei Pleșu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Horia-Roman Patapievici *O idee care ne sucește mințile* (Bucharest Humanitas, 2014).

12 Andrzej Nowak, 'Political Correctness and Memories Constructed for "Eastern Europe"', in ed. Pakier and Wawrzyniak *Memory and Change in Europe*, 43–4.

13 Ed. Simona Mitroiu, *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 6.

14 See Nowak, 'Political Correctness'.

15 See Régine Robin, *La mémoire saturée* (Paris: Stock 2003).

from the East in need of sorting and recognition. Scholars, included Astrid Erll, have argued that these testimonials needed to emerge because the neglected stories denied individuals the much-needed official recognition necessary for society-wide healing and reconciliation.[16] Nowak makes a similar point by arguing that normative top-down memory politics reinforced a sense of lack of understanding, distancing and an additional sense of injustice for these groups.[17]

A divided memory between West and East Europe emerged. According to Charles S. Maier the "cold" memory of the Gulag and communism faded in comparison to memory of the Shoah.[18] Eastern Europeans had their agenda, which included incorporating east European loss and suffering into official European memory. Competing completing agendas led scholar Tony Judt to claim that while Western Europe has too little memory or even amnesia, Eastern Europe has too much.[19] Describing Western and Eastern European memory construction in this way is, however, too simplistic, because such a depiction reiterates the supposedly reason-driven scientific knowledge derived from Western Europe against unreliable East European memory. This dualism relies on enduring Eurocentric structures of knowledge upholding an ideal of "European-ness" located in the West against an unreliable knowledge from the "East". The dualism further relies on the "special nature" of memory in Eastern Europe, as descried by Pakier and Wawrzyniak, that led to an "othering" of Eastern Europe.[20] According to Maier, history and memory in Eastern Europe viewed from the West of the continent is depicted as "out of control", with tribal passions, blood feuds, and "primitive" ethnic strife that threaten "stability in Europe".[21]

16 Astrid Erll, trans. Sara B. Young, *Memory in Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)*,* 172.

17 Nowak, 'Political Correctness', 43-4.

18 Charles S. Maier, 'Hot Memory … Cold Memory. On the Political Half-Life of Fascist and Communist Memory', Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (the Institute for Human Sciences – IWM), available at: https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/hot-memory-cold-memory-on-the-political-half-life-of-fascist-and-communist-memory/.

19 Judt, *Thinking the twentieth century,* 172.

20 Pakier and Wawrzyniak, *Memory and Change in Eastern Europe*, 17.

21 See Maier, 'Hot Memory … Cold Memory'.

The reasoning behind 'unreliable east European memory' is similar to "refrigerator" or "frozen" memory approach.[22] According to Malgorzata Glowacka-Grajper the "frozen memory" approach to studying the legacy of socialism condones the idea that communism only managed to freeze, not cancel out or resolve, old ethnic, religious or historic conflicts in eastern European societies. For Glowacka-Grajper the demise of communism resulted in de-freezing tensions that lay dormant. It is not the validity of such claims that is of interest for this discussion, rather, it is the reliance alleged experts on the region have on dubious notions such as "ancient quarrels" and ideas of "Eastern Europe" as atemporal and unchanging which are pertinent. Political changes, society-wide restructuring, generational change and social migration in eastern Europe warrant nuanced analysis. Scholarly investigations of memory in Europe that start from a priori assumptions that eastern European societies are unchanging and that any post-socialist phenomenon is always to be explained culturally is damaging and problematic. This perspective operates on the assumption that the region, its experts and the memory it produces are unreliable and incapable of offering insight. East European memory becomes silenced and certainly not seen as an agent in shaping European memory.

Another problematic phenomenon in memory politics is the treatment of the Holocaust as a so-called "German-related problem"[23] Within this narrative knowledge of the systematic exclusion of the Jewish population from society, denial of rights, participation in and taking advantage of the pogroms and deportations is confined to the German nation. The European dimension of the phenomenon of Volksgemeinschaft is silenced and collective responsibility is omitted from conversations. In life writing local accounts of the Shoah and, accordingly, the necessity of its

22 For a discussion on the so-called frozen memory during communism see Malgorzata Glowacka-Grajper, 'Memory in Post-communist Europe: Controversies over Identity, Conflicts, and Nostalgia', *East European Politics and Societies* 32, 4 (2018): 924–35.

23 Catherine Merridale, 'Amnesiac Nation', *Index on Censorship,* 34, 2 (2005): 76–82.

memory in eastern Europe is missing. Current memory scholarship fails to incorporate all European history and will continue to do so as long as the extent and scope of events including the Shoah are missing from European writing. A notion of a united European memory cannot continue to relegate the genocide against Europe's Jewish population to a German problem or treat the Gulag as a uniquely Soviet problem.[24]

1.1 The need to remember after the fall of communism

This section explains the context in which life writing, memoirs and testimonial literature emerged after the fall of socialist regimes in eastern Europe. It provides a general discussion of the social climate following the fall of socialist regimes and the issues the memory debates that ensued focused on. Memory debates after 1989 were marked by a series of dilemmas.[25] On the one side social reconciliation and healing were deemed more urgent than retributive justice whereas, on the other side, entire social groups demanded justice and reparations. Consequently, public policies in the former socialist countries in eastern Europe were a mix of responses reflecting the will to remember and the will to forget. After five decades of state and self censorship, a culture of lies, purposeful dis-information, reliance on rumours, propaganda and fake official reports, the need for memory became urgent. Communist regimes in Eastern European societies constantly changed their history to suit their ever-changing needs. Because of this, official history in these societies was perceived as a state-orchestrated lie. Considering "Memory" from this viewpoint, reveals how "Memory" can be a strategy of recuperating symbolic space with truth as the terrain that needs to be regained. "Memory" is of symbolic value in terms of recuperating pre-regime traditions and forms of belonging be they liberal, monarchic or agrarian culture. Investigations into the past however are

24 Pakier, Stråth, *A European Memory?*, 2-3.

25 See Glowacka-Grajper, 'Memory in Post-communist Europe'; Nikola Petrović, 'Divided national memories and EU crises: how Eurosceptic parties mobilize historical narratives', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research,* [Special Issue: Memory Wars Pages] Volume 32, 3 (2019): 363–84.

never easy as they de-stabilize present-day communities by questioning the foundations of the social pacts that currently govern their way of life. At a society-level finding the truth about state-run operations against its own citizens can threaten to de-legitimize a political regime, and the legitimacy of statehood. At the individual level disruption occurs within social relationships. Further, the social fabric of society may be disrupted once generalised trust is compromised.

1.2 Writing about the past. Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić

After the foregoing preliminary remarks, I now turn to the representation of the past and memory in Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić's texts. Drakulić and Liiceanu's engagement with memory offer insights into multiple experiences of communism in eastern Europe that have remained marginal in European "collective memory".[26] Liiceanu writes about a gap between Western European memory and Eastern European memory that leaves many individuals in Eastern Europe feeling they have no public voice and their experiences are not acknowledged.[27] Liiceanu decries this situation and uses his writing to engage with and alter this situation. He demands a stop to what he calls "double standards" in European memorialising and demands that the Gulag and Shoah are treated equally.[28] Drakulić aims to foreground European marginal memory narratives of suffering in the Balkans, forced displacements, and the little-known experience of the aggressors in the Yugoslav wars. She is concerned that the generational silence on these issues presents a threat to learning the lessons of the past.[29] Memory is crucial for both Liiceanu and Drakulić. They both take on the east European traditional understanding of the role of the intellectual and of the writer as a

26 See Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele*; Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*; Drakulić, *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism: fables from a mouse, a parrot, a bear, a cat, a mole, a pig, a dog, and a raven* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011).

27 See ed. Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici, *O idee care ne sucește minţile.*

28 Liiceanu, 'O idee care ne-a sucit minţile', in Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici, *O idee care ne sucește minţile,* 55–102.

29 See Liiceanu, 'O idee care ne-a sucit minţile'.

custodian of memory, a truth-seeking and truth-telling agent in the service of the nation.[30] In the following two sections I discuss three frames of interpretation used to (re)present memories of the recent past in Drakulić and Liiceanu's works.

2 Memory writing in Gabriel Liiceanu

This section discusses Gabriel Liiceanu's memory writing and representation of the recent past. Liiceanu's texts that address the issue of remembrance and memory can be grouped in three main clusters. Firstly, he focuses on the narrative of communism as an individual and collective trauma. These texts address the socialist experience and frame the political regime that existed in Romania from the aftermath of WWII till 1989 as profoundly unjust and destablizing for the entire society. The second main cluster in Liiceanu's memory writing is focused on representing communism through the framework of victimhood. Through this cluster of texts the socialist regime is presented by Liiceanu as a systematic and institutionalised act of injustice inflicted upon an entire population. These narratives focus mainly on the victims of state injustice. The limitations and problems with such representations are that they leave out an array of historical episodes in which individuals negotiated their private interests with the socialist regime. Liiceanu's third focus in representing the memory of communism is on narrating the experience as a foreign occupation. Liiceanu represents the socialist regime as illegitimate foreign occupation. The purpose and assumptions of his narratives is, of course, to discredit the legitimacy of socialist regimes in eastern European societies. The underlying assumptions upon which such narratives operate include: socialist parties allegedly won elections fraudulently and socialist doctrines were illegitimate because they do not emerge from any "European" political tradition. The final pillar of Liiceanu's memory writing is nostalgia

30 Richard S. Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe', *Representations*, 49 (1995) [Special Issue: Identifying Histories: Eastern Europe Before and After 1989], 74.

for the past. In the particular case of Liiceanu nostalgia manifests itself in idealisation of the interwar period of Romanian society. This idealisation operates on the assumption of an interwar multicultural democratic society, a not uncommon reference-point for Romanian nostalgias. This final section of Liiceanu's work discusses the limits and problems of such an approach with reference to the past and the problems it presents for imagining a project of societal renewal in post-socialist Romania.

2.1The memory of communism as trauma[31]

Memorialist literature emerged in Europe in the 1990s as an avenue for voicing the experiences sustained in prisons, labour camps, self-imposed exile or forced displacements. Works conveying personal experiences of injustice, imprisonment and terror have been utilised by some writers as examples of the "criminal" nature of the communist regime.[32] This frame of interpretation led the way to establish "trauma" as a main theme of memory on communism. Several scholars define trauma as the situation in which members of a group display signs of having been subjected to a frightful event. Moreover, trauma is defined when a disrupting event leaves enduring marks upon a group's memory and the manner in which that event is triggered by another, later, event that resembles or echoes the first. [33] The proliferation of memoirs marked a shift from the "politics of amnesia" that characterised the 1990s to a "politics of anamnesis" that brought private experiences into the public sphere and into official memory.[34]

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31 The primary sources utilised from Gabriel Liiceanu's work are Liiceanu 'O idee care ne-a sucit minţile,' in Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici, *O idee care ne sucește minţile*; Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele*; Liiceanu*, Ușa Interzisă.*

32 See Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici, *O idee care ne sucește minţile*.

33 Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma' in ed. Alexander e al. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

34 Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past', 33.

Collective trauma is often portrayed in life writing as a defence mechanism against a painful past. Writers who view the communist experience as traumatic, at an individual and collective level, often criticize governments, intellectuals and others who refuse to confront the past. Writers of memorialist literature view confronting the past as a necessary step to healing and reconstructing post war and post-communist society. According to sociologist Mihai Rusu, public commemorations or any rituals acknowledging victimhood or mourning ceremonies are a set of tools that aid communities in processing traumatic pasts.[35] They bring communities together in ways that celebrating joy cannot. Grief is useful for facilitating identification between self and the nation.[36]

Gabriel Liiceanu represents living under communism as a totalizing reality. In his writing he equates communism with the Gulag and entire societies as incarceration camps in which every aspect of the lives of citizens are surveilled. Liiceanu writes:

> Only once they were lifted in the middle of the night from their beds, tortured and sent without trial for tens of years of imprisonment did people find out what inferno and paradise on earth truly meant. Only once they knew what Party discipline meant, organised lies, legalised snitching, knowingly hiding one's thoughts from colleagues, friends, life partner and from one's own children, only then did people truly know what inferno and paradise on earth meant. Only once they were forced to express their enthusiasm and gratitude in a state of hunger, torment and humiliation, to applaud, sing, recite, write banners with their bodies did they truly found out what the inferno and paradise on earth meant.[37]

In this text Liiceanu constructs a black and white rendering of life under socialism. In a rhetorical and dramatised rendering Liiceanu wished to contrast the difference between the idealist expectations of what the communist regime would bring and the actual experience of injustice and violence that many individuals experienced. The intention of this contrast, between the predicted

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35 Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past', 27.

36 Rusu, 27.

37 Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele,* 44.

bright future and the disillusionment of reality, is of course, a rhetorical device. By using such a narrative strategy it can be argued that Liiceanu wishes to suggest that, despite all noble intentions, the socialist experiment has failed. This is a very uncompromising position to take and one that lacks the many nuances that complex phenomena often require.

Unlike Liiceanu, Hungarian philosopher and member of the Budapest School, Agnes Heller contends that what we term "trauma" today can only be individual and not collective. Heller argues that in our contemporary treatment of the term "trauma" we over-stretch its analytic capability and transfer its original use from psychology to other disciplines. Due to a poverty of terminology we confuse trauma, shame, perceived guilt and moral guilt. She describes "collective trauma", as the term is used today, as a framework for experiencing the world, a form of alleviation of experiences of shame. She argues that it is precisely the capability of sharing the experience that makes it unsuitable to be described as trauma.[38] The difference for Heller lies in the fact that while the experience of being victimized is devastating, it is not annihilating or debilitating as it does not carry the element of shame. For Heller only shame is trauma, which, by its nature, cannot be communicated, overcome, expelled, exteriorised. Trauma, it follows, can be communicated and overcome. Heller finds agency in the position of the victim. She argues that personality or identity can be maintained because one is never:

> entirely dispossessed of freedom: s/he remains always a personality, if only in shambles... Trauma victims can feel guilty, yet they are not morally responsible for their victimization. And this is an essential, if not absolute difference in the two types of cases. There is not katharsis for trauma victims. The survivors cannot 'move on' and become another person, because the wound never heals and the scar will always remain.[39]

38 Agnes Heller, 'The shame of trauma. The trauma of shame,' in ed. Matthew Sharpe, Murray Noonan, and Jason Freddi, *Trauma, History, Philosophy. With Feature Essays by Agnes Heller and György Markus* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 112-3.

39 Heller, 'The shame of trauma. The trauma of shame'. 119.

Interpreting living under communism as trauma is described by Rusu as the product of anticommunist elites' memory efforts.[40] The fact that this memory stream is the product of a very narrow section of the population who alone can claim relevance weakens the legitimacy of the narrative of "communism as trauma". If "communism as trauma" is to be read as collective or society-wide then the fact that this interpretation only emerges from an elite group poses serious questions. Moreover, this elite memory is inconsistent with surveys that claim large sways of east European populations actually display feelings of nostalgia for the communist? past.[41] Some scholars are concerned that this effort to institutionalize a totalitarianism-inspired memory with it sole focus on the centrality of terror and oppression is done "at the expense of the more comfortable memories of large swathes of the population that did not directly experience oppression and may have enjoyed the economic security and social predictability of life under communism."[42]

2.2 The memory of communism as victimhood

I now discuss Liiceanu's depiction of the communist experience under the interpretative frame of 'victimhood'. His representation of the past casts the alien oppressors on one side and agency-less victims on the other. This is a view that oversimplifies a very complex landscape. I do not wish to deny the reality of terror and injustice that communism represented for many. However, as Mihai Stelian Rusu argues, it is necessary to avoid over-stretching the experience of some groups to entire societies. Many segments of the population in eastern Europe have benefited from the social policies, industrialization and social mobility offered by socialism. In all of Liiceanu's writing on memory, the recent past and Romania he collapses political doctrine, regime and experience under a

40 Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past', 34.

41 Sabina Mihelj, 'Memory, Post-socialism and the Media: Nostalgia and Beyond', *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 20, 3 (2017), 3; Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

42 Zoltan Dujisin, 'Post-Communist Europe On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance?' in *Thinking through transition,* ed. Kopeček and Wciślik, 562.

single umbrella. His is a manner of describing the past that borrows extensively from Totalitarian Paradigm imagery. Horror is placed at the centre of such interpretations which leaves no room for nuance or alternative views. Liiceanu constructs communism using Dantesque imagery of the Inferno. He writes:

> This knot of history made by coiled bodies from tens of thousands, hundred of thousands and tens of millions of coiled bodies, tied together with devilish wisdom, this knot big as a mountain that no human hand can untie although it was made by men with men, with their lives, with the misery, hope, ideals, torments and their death, this knot that could not snap but from within, from the strength of cords overstretched by the hatred, ugliness and lie that presided over its making – this knot that entered the history of humanity under the name of 'communism' was supposed to become overnight the object of a mere preface. How can one write over a few pages about the essence of this incomparable coil that our mind, incapable of encompassing it, is ever more tempted to forget it and mind its own business.[43]

Victimhood as a central concept to understanding communist experience casts individuals as helpless passive victims. Individuals are thus essentialised as victims, effectively depriving them of agency, denying behaviour such as resistance that they may have exercised. Further, labelling an entire population as victims obscures peoples' support and participation in the communist regime. Doing this polarises people with victims on one side and perpetrators on the other. It cannot be denied that during their initial takeover and attempt to stabilize power communist regimes inflicted a reign of terror. Uprising and contestations were met with violence. However, from the beginning of the 1970s, a so-called consolidation or "normalization" phase emerged in most regimes in the east. These new social pacts were possible only with agreement between authorities and their population. By over stressing, extending and generalizing the terror and injustice of the regime the longevity and popular support for socialist regimes in eastern Europe is denied.[44]

43 Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele*, 106.

44 Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past', 36.

The notion that Eastern European societies were divided as war bounty and left to endure communism is popular in the region. In this view, Western Europe appears guilty of allowing communism to spread and Eastern Europe to be its victim.[45] The agents who endorse this discourse obfuscate the political agency of the people from the region and deny the many ways in which support from the population was vital. Portraying Eastern Europeans as helpless victims to exonerate their participation in the communist project is destructive. Denying the reality of co-optation and accommodation with the regime negates historical truth.

Victimhood as a framework for interpreting and conveying the recent past can be problematic. Serguei Oushakine argues that victimhood produces no new constructive or positive narrative about a reclaimed community. Instead, the kinds of narratives supported and produced within this viewpoint are essentially a reiteration and commemoration of victims especially when it is not a necessary part of a process of recognition of injustice, but an exclusive aim. Oushakine argues that resistance is not the driving force within the victimhood framework. He claims that research focused on victimhood and memory work are geared towards advancing martyrological projects that highlight the colonizers brutality and double subjection under both fascist and communist dictatorships. When the colonized do feature their portrayal is used negatively with the aim of indicating nonpresence.[46] Claims to victimhood thus deny political opposition under communism, and all forms of resistance, agency and autonomy.

Under this logic the colonizer is equated with anything Soviet. The actual agents of oppression are not considered in their complexity or historical specificity, but constructed and fitted into an umbrella category. The oppressor becomes a non-native enemy. The stories that accompany this

45 Rusu, 38.

46 Oushakine, ‘Postcolonial Estrangements’, 286-7.

narrative focus mostly on the "fatality of exteriority."[47] In this way memory work runs the risk of not serving any group, rather fuelling resentment and dividing society. This instrumentalization of memory, and with it the remembrance and commemorative rituals are fuelled by a desire to contain and distance the past rather than provide a basis from which the de-colonized community can move forward.[48]

2.3 The memory of communism as occupation

Communism as foreign occupation is at the centre of Gabriel Liiceanu's representation of the recent past. Romania is seen by Liiceanu as having an 'unfortunate' geopolitical position situated at the confluence of great powers. In Liiceanu's eyes, the country itself has no ambition or interest in the region; it is effectively agency-less. Liiceanu's insistence on reading communism as "an alien invasion" suggests he aligns himself with Milan Kundera's anti-Russian sentiments in *The Tragedy of Central Europe*. In a manner similar to Kundera, Liiceanu regards the Soviet influence in post WWII eastern European societies as a foreign, non-European, presence. It is important to note that both Kundera and Liiceanu make political arguments by relying on Eurocentric notions. The agents who are responsible for this ideology are distanced and attributed to a foreign, non-European "tradition", and therefore seen as illegitimate and belonging elsewhere. He writes:

> Inasmuch as it was not rooted in history, but ushered in something that had never before existed on earth, communism appears to have fallen upon mankind like an alien civilization that suppresses with one swift blow our entire history, throwing us all in the confusion of a never-ending nightmare.[49]

47 Oushakine, 286-7.

48 Oushakine, 286.

49 Liiceanu, *Om şi simbol. Interpretări ale simbolului în teoria artei şi filozofia culturii* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005), 42.

The idea that communist regimes were installed in eastern European societies through foreign invasion by the Soviet Army does have a basis in historic fact. There was an initial phase of foreign occupation from 1944 to 1958. [50] However, myth-making temporally stretches and over-generalizes this particular situation to the entire duration of the communist regime.[51] Doing this results in facile explanations and fails to explain the reasons why communist parties managed to retain power for such a long time and in the process manage to exonerate the population of responsibility.[52]

To Liiceanu communism, as a political doctrine, regime and social experience is a sickness infecting the healthy body of society. It is interesting to note that the healthy aspects of society are always identified as European whereas the malady remains non-European. He writes that communism was a "terrible malady... like the syphilis that infiltrates the body under the promise of carnal pleasure or the poison hiding inside a ripe apple".[53] Liberal, conservative, peasant culture or monarchy are viewed by Liiceanu as "European" political traditions that legitimately belong to Romanian history. He contrasts this to the Marxist-Leninist experience which he regards as non-European and ill-suited to "European" societies.

The idea that communist regimes were a result of an external Moscow-backed take- over is a widely- known and shared opinion in the region. This line of thought is based on the notion that local communist party organizations were few, did not enjoy any real support within east European societies and did not stem from local intellectual traditions. Hence, communism was rejected as imported political theory because of its strong association with Russia. The 'communism as occupation' interpretative frame is known throughout the region, but does not enjoy the same

50 See Claudia-Florentina Dobre, 'Avatars of the Social Imaginary: Myth about Romanian Communism after 1989', in *Quest for a Suitable Past: Myths and Memory in Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. Claudia-Florentina Dobre and Cristian Emilian Ghiţă (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 101–15.

51 Dobre, 'Avatars', 104-5.

52 Dobre, 105.

53 Liiceanu, *Om şi simbol,* 35.

popularity in all east European societies. In countries where partisans took part in a recognised anti-fascist liberation effort, as is the case of fascist Italy or Yugoslavia for instance, notions that communism is alien or foreign does not enjoy great support. However, in societies including Romania where communist parties were banned and had low membership the idea of communism as an alien occupation enjoys tremendous popularity. There is support for this idea in societies such as Poland, Bulgaria or Romania where anticommunist agents involved in public memory work view the socialist past as a "historical aberration". Furthermore scholars in these societies reject the "native" or local nature of the communist regime by viewing it as an "alien" imposition.[54] In this view the change in political regime is perceived as a foreign power takeover, a coup d'état from the outside, a violation of national sovereignty.

Through a process of Orientalism communism is Othered. The communist experience is then viewed as a deviated modernity or error in national history. The ideology, with its specific aims and modes of execution are collapsed and contained in a single category of timeless communism. Truth-commissions and national reports commissioned within this context are not concerned with reckoning with the past, but rather with officially condemning communism as "criminal". Despite their "deliberate confusion of political theory and political praxis" the documentation resulting from Truth-commissions are then used to establish legal frameworks for censoring those with dissenting views and alternative post-socialist memories.[55] Interpreting the fall of socialist regimes in eastern Europe as support for the view that socialism is anti-modernity was widespread and supported by "the anticommunist establishment" of the 1990s.[56] There was a commonly-shared view that socialism, as an economic, political and social project was a failure and not part of a longer intellectual European social tradition that found expression as an alternative model of modernity.

54 Dujisin, 'Post-Communist Europe', 562.

55 Rusu, 'Battling over Romanian red past', 36-7.

56 See Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, 'Towards a critical theory of postcommunism? Beyond anticommunism in Romania,' *Radical Philosophy*, 159, 1 (2010).

This viewpoint has been challenged on numerous occasions.[57] Peter Beilharz, for instance, agrees that communism as an ideology of modernization is insufficiently contemplated and furthermore, is discredited as an anachronism, and regarded as premodern or antimodern.[58] Beilharz argues that "socialism was born as the counterculture of capitalism, a legitimate offspring of the bourgeois revolution eager to continue the work that the latter had started but failed to complete."[59] Despite extensive criticism of this neoliberal transition-era viewpoint makes an occasional comeback motivated by the desire to distance communism and reject any of its claims to belonging to the uncompleted project of modernity.

2.4 Nostalgia for the pre-regime

Distorted notions of pre-regime utopia such as the Golden Age of Romania's past, a "Romania felix" is a trope that describes a tolerant multicultural democratic Romanian society.[60] This idealization of the interwar period over-emphasizes national cultural achievements while ignoring the reality of an unjust hierarchic society that excludes the majority of its rural population from having any opportunities for social advancement.[61] The type of memory that emerges in Liiceanu's life writing tends to Europeanize and falsify Romania's past. The notable fascist sympathies of young Romanian intellectuals of the Inter-war generation are very much downplayed in his writing as if fascism were a strictly "German problem". In *Ușa Interzisă* Liiceanu credits the Communist Party victory and rise to power with producing a historical break between the democratic path of the inter-war and what came afterwards. He writes:

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57 See Johann P., Arnason, 'Communism and modernity', *Daedalus,* 129, 1 (2000): 61–90.

58 Peter Beilharz, *Socialism and Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 118-9.

59 Beilharz, *Socialism and Modernity*, 170-1.

60 Dobre, 'Avatars', 101–15.

61 Dobre, 108.

> Beyond the atrocities catalogued in history books there is also the matter of the everyday aesthetics, of indescribable rottenness of every atom of life from the face of the objects that surrounded us … to social relationships based on vulgarity and lies, suspicion, fear and delation … How much dishonesty or stupidity one needs in order to desire to search for the continuity between the 'Romanian Inter-war period' and this historic circle of hell?[62]

In samples of writing such as this Liiceanu leaves no room for nuanced readings. He is inflexible in his negative account of communism. The socialist regime is credited for producing many ills in Romanian society and no positive outcomes.

Another sample of writing and the manner in which Liiceanu resorts to an idealisation of the past is his relationship with the monarchy. The memory of the monarchy during inter-war Romania is part of that search for a pre-regime ideal. The historic moment of the abdication of King Michael I of Romania is interpreted by Liiceanu as a symbol of a loss of dignity for the entire Romanian people. He writes:

> The terrible things that is happening to us all is that, in our case, the horror happened as the world watched, in plain daylight, on the grand scene of history. The King was sent in exile by the invading aliens. Since then 45 years have past, 45 years in which we've clung to our chairs in the cave and minute after minute the same images paraded before our sight, in the same deceiving sequence ... the same alien faces presented as 'saviours' ...“Out of respect for the history of this country I go back to the place where the rupture was produced and, apparently, where the non-history of an entire people started. I need to regain my history and I find the king in this history. I find him because the elementary logic of justice and of the reparation of a violated history makes me find him naturally. I find him not because I need myths, but because I need the certainty of evacuating communism from our country. I find him as an instance of our lost morality and as a guarantee of our moral regeneration. I find him as an expression of our reconciliation with ourselves and with the sky above us.[63]

This of revisiting and representing the past in life writing through a nostalgic lens is similar to Alexandra Smith’s recollection of the appropriation of Russian émigré poets in postsocialist Russia. Smith argues that appropriation could be interpreted as a “manifestation of the Russian cultural

62 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă,* 268.

63 Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele*, 82.

elite's longing for pre-revolutionary values, institutions, national unity and educational practices."[64] Smith suggests this longing could be explained by the specific climate of the post-regime. In other words, the distress felt by the profound changes in the post-regime 1990s may have led to the need to re-create bonds with the pre-regime generation of intellectuals who went into exile. By creating this symbolic bond a sense of continuation of culture is produced and the tension and anxiety that ensues from deep-societal tension is diminished.[65] This is similar to the cultural and political climate of postsocialist Romania during which a sense of disjuncture from national culture was "reconciled" by efforts aimed at "re-uniting" postsocialist national culture with the pre-regime national culture. In Romania's case this meant taking the interwar generation of intellectuals as a reference model for cultural production during the post-regime. The period of time between the pre-regime and the post-regime is thus rejected and distanced from the idealised model of national culture. Considering that postsocialist Romanian historiography tends to view official cultural production during communism as ideologically tainted, it follows that we are witnessing a process of selectively remembering what constitutes national culture. The post-regime effort of reclaiming the past thus turns into a selective retrospective process of revisiting and constructing a fragmented notion of national culture.

3. Memory in Slavenka Drakulić's writing

I now turn to the writing of Slavenka Drakulić, to examine how she represents the recent past and her outlook on how memory work should be carried out in eastern Europe. Her texts on memory focus mainly on three issues: the role of the Shoah and the issue of collective responsibility in eastern Europe, the memory of the war of disintegration of Yugoslavia, and communism presented as a travelling museum. Slavenka Drakulić's memory work is an effort to save the past from

64 Alexandra Smith, 'The Post-Soviet Homecoming of First-Wave Russian Émigré Poets and its Impact on the Reinvention of the Past', in ed. Katharine Hodgson, Joanne Shelton, Alexandra Smith, *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 362.

65 Smith, 'The Post-Soviet Homecoming', 363.

oblivion so that it remains necessary material for reflection. She decries the state of official truth, history and propaganda in turbulent postsocialist societies. She regards the silence between her father's generation, participants in the Second World War, and her own pacified generation as detrimental. Growing up in a context of state propaganda, invented foundational legends and myths rather than having access to factual history, Drakulić's need for truth comes as fundamental. She observes that new orders, new regimes are often built on amnesia, thus denying the past in the present. Eradicating memory, producing new histories, propaganda, lies and indoctrination are all part of the legitimation efforts of new regimes, even ones that call themselves democratic. There is no defence against such indoctrination other than what we devise for ourselves. For Drakulić, remembering the past, making room for truth and taking responsibility as a society for our common past is essential. Her memory writing is a fight against amnesia. The main pillars of Drakulić's memory writing are built on this reasoning. To reprise my opening remarks, her memory work comprises of reflections on the dangers of distancing the past, the memory of the Shoah, collective responsibility and remembering the shared experiences of communism.

Drakulić's history and writing about memory are not narratives of oppressive communist power against powerless victims. In a landscape of east European memory divided between popular nostalgia and elite anticommunist memory Drakulić does not position herself in either. She does not remember the fall of the regime as the victory of dissident discourse, neither does she remember it as civil society or a desire for freedom and democracy as the neo-liberal or conservative discourse of the 1990s might suggest. She remembers the fall as a failure of socialist societies to provide the basic needs of its citizens. That is where Drakulić locates discontent and upheaval. She does not write moralist or heroic anticommunist narratives of the past. She looks at the past with the eyes of a social historian, at the everyday experience of individuals, the relationship between politics and everyday life.

3.1 The memory of the Shoah

Memory of the Shoah strikes at the heart of the notion of a 'good and noble Europe', destabilizing the European memory constructed in the West. In "A Croat Among Jews" and "My Father's Guilt" Drakulić approaches the memory of Shoah as a prime concern for debates on European memory. She refuses to identify the Shoah as a strictly German problem. She raises the need for accountability, and personal reflection on the significance of the Shoah for each and every European and the need for European societies to make a personal reckoning with the past by taking collective responsibility.[66]

The foundational myth of the Croat nation includes denial of participation in the Jewish genocide. Drakulić refuses this interpretation. She reflects on herself as a European and Croat and cannot distance herself from the persecution of European Jewish people. For Drakulić there is personal and collective responsibility for the Shoah. Drakulić reflects on how this past of violence and distrust disrupts problematic national identities, and the foundational myth of a united and peaceful "Europe".[67] She attempts to integrate the significance of the Shoah as part of European identity for every individual and nation. By doing so Drakulić writes the self into the history of the Shoah. Ultimately, the memory of the Shoah is the memory of her own community, her own nation. Drakulić as narrator moves from tour guide for those who do not know eastern Europe or socialist regimes to confessor of her own past. Her audience thus becomes a witness to her confession.

66 See Drakulić, 'A Croat Among Jews'; 'My Father's Guilt' in *Café Europa*.

67 See Drakulić, 'Who's afraid of Europe?' *Eurozine* (2000). Available at: https://www.eurozine.com/whos-afraid-of-europe/

3.2 The memory of communism as a walking museum

A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism is an anthology of fables. Drakulić chooses the allegorical form of the fable as a genre for recalling communism.[68] The narratives museumize communism. The anthology reads as an act of self-empowerment. The narrator takes upon herself the power to assign once powerful ideologies to the "rubbish heap of history".[69] Memory is narrated as recollections of the past and facts, theory, ideology, propaganda, gossip, mis-information in an effort to re-create the universe of uncertainty that socialism was for many. Drakulić uses legends, riddles, jokes and gossip, letters, interviews and scientific discussions. Drakulić re-creates the experiences of communism for her audience. As explained later in the chapter she intentionally includes lies, distorted facts and irrelevant information in her presentation, often treating them with irony in an effort to translate what everyday living under such regimes actually meant in people's lives. Like all allegories, the fable has a moral, this time about oblivion.

The characters in Drakulić's fables are all animals that she sometimes lends her voice to. They symbolize the specific situation and experiences of communism in the countries they represent. Yugoslav memory of communism is narrated in "A Communist with style". Here, the biographer, jester and critic, a parrot named Koki recalls the cult personality constructed around Josip Broz Tito. The choice of a parrot for the narrator may be an allusion to the absence of real figures speaking truth to power in Yugoslavia. The ironic tone and cynicism Drakulić resorts to in this narration inscribes the story in a longer tradition of subversive jokes about the communist nomenklatura that was widely shared within communist underground circles. Also reminiscent of this tradition of subversiveness is the image of the parrot turned jester as an outlet for speaking the

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68 For a critical reading of what the allegorical form entails in political and social critique see Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: the theory of a symbolic mode,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

69 Drakulić, *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism*, 6.

truth in a safe informal forum within a larger society built on lies. The parrot as a jester may also be a reference to Leszek Kolakowski's work “The Priest and the Jester”. In Kolakowski’s story the jester is the impertinent nouveau riche who questions everything others accept as self-evident. Thus the jester may be a witness to events who openly pronounces the crude truth about his ruler.

“The bear and the princess of light” is the story of an abused bear in Bulgaria who bears witness to the repressive communist regime under Zhivkov. The figure of the bear is the position of double victimhood as he is in a relationship of dependency to his master who keeps him hostage. The image of the bear can be easily substituted for that of individuals living under the same conditions. The social pact between authorities and the population was an ambivalent situation for individuals. While the communist regime provided the basic necessities of life, individuals traded their freedom in exchange for welfare and security, living in a situation of simultaneous reinforcement of the status quo, as well as personal entrapment. The image of the bear in chains stands as a reminder of a society rendered non-human because it has traded its most prized possession in exchange for mere subsistence.

”The cat keeper in Warsaw” is written in the form of a letter. Here Poland’s communist memory is recalled by a cat named Gorby who, concerned with the effects of division among people, makes an appeal to the State Attorney General Jaruzelski. A compromise between the claims voiced by the Solidarity struggle and the General’s call to normalization is represented as a form of Catholic forgiveness. Gorby’s solution is befitting for a traditionally Catholic country that believes in confession, penance and the redemption from sins. The sins she alludes to are those associated with Jaruzelski’s violent dictatorship and those of the silent population who stand as accomplices.

The memory of the so-called "goulash communism" in Hungary is recalled in "From Gulag to Goulash". Here a pig emigrates to London. In an effort to translate the reality of his experience to a foreign audience who refuse to understand, the pig writes a cookbook in which he presents his theory of the relationship between goulash and gulag. It is a clear allusion to the contrast between the images of communism seen from afar and the reality of those who lived within.

Another fable "An interview with the oldest dog in Bucharest" is the story of Romanian communism. Romanians are represented by the metaphor of a hungry homeless dog who, confused over what to do with his newly-gained freedom, longs for the guidance of his old master Ceauşescu. The population is depicted as aimless, confused and unable to care for themselves. Traditionally accustomed to being cared for by a saviour, a leader telling them what to do, freedom becomes an "asset" no one knows how to use.

In "The unusual case of the psychotic raven" the alleged suicide of Prime Minister Shehu in Albania is recalled by the figure of a psychotic raven, as no human dares to make the most dangerous allegations of all – to tell the truth. The narrative structure is replaced by a diary. The dialogue between the mother, the psychiatrist, and the raven is based on historical facts about the murder of the Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu.

As this series of fables in *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* shows, Drakulić uses allegory as a medium for conveying her critique of the absurdity of the socialist universe. The voice with which she guides the reader through this vast museum is witty and sharp, but the register never transgresses into the realm of the sensational. In doing so Drakulić successfully manages to pull off

a difficult feat: inserting herself into a painful past and retelling it to a younger generation in a manner that manages to avoid the risks of "commodification" or "disneyfication" of the Balkans.[70]

3.3 The memory of war

In a striking parallel to Hannah Arendt's writings about the "banality of evil" as she attends Eichmann's trial hearings in Jerusalem, Drakulić writes a re-consideration of those deemed historical "monsters" in *They would never hurt a fly: War criminals on trial in the Hague*. Like Arendt, Drakulić is sent to report on court proceedings. In Drakulić's case the court in question is the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. Her aim is to understand the circumstances that allowed such atrocities to happen in her homeland. She writes in order to report back, but also to make sense for herself of what happened. With sensitivity and attention to detail Drakulić tries to imagine and recreate the environment from which "the monsters" came. They were from poor, close-knit communities in the mountains who do not have much contact with the surrounding regions and who follow their own strict cultural codes of honour and patriarchalism. Drakulić wishes to offer the broader context in which hatred and group killings took place in the Balkans. She uses elements from her own biography to highlight the deep social, not cultural, gaps in the fabric of Balkan society. By stating her own privileged status isolated from the realities of the remote rural villages, Drakulić invites similar reflections from her readers.

Drakulić's writing strategies include identification both with the position of the victim, the mother, but also with the perpetrator in an attempt to have a better grasp of what happened. In doing so she imagines the perpetrators' view of the crimes and how they experienced their own trials. Drakulić

70 Jovana Vukcevic, Sanja Pekovic, Djurdjica Perovic, Tatjana Stanovcic, 'Commodifying Things Past: Comparative Study of Heritage Tourism Practices in Montenegro and Serbia', World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol 11, 1, (2017).

uses free indirect style in order to bring the recent past to the present and show its relevance and immediacy. However, it is not clear who really "owns" these words, whether she imagines them or repeats fragments of what she heard during the proceedings. Despite the problematic use of representation and the strategy of identification with the perpetrator, she must be credited for offering multi-perspectives on the proceedings of the Tribunal and the trial.

The stories and experiences of the silent others are not always heroes in the narrative. In the case of the conflicts ensuing the disintegration of Yugoslavia Drakulić gives voice to the anti-heroes, the perpetrators of crime. She wishes to include what she imagines is their perspective because they took part in the conflict and therefore should belong in the narrative representing that past. She does not write an apologetics of crime or relativize the gravity of their actions, but believes telling the perpetrators' story is necessary for confronting the past and taking responsibility.

Drakulić identified silence about the past as a source of future conflict. She gives the example of her father's refusal to speak about his own involvement with the partisan movement and how that, together with being a part of a generation characterised by general indifference, leads to a situation in which an entire generation gets cut off and is unable to understand the bigger dynamics of their own circumstance. She talks about the general attitude she and her peers had and the level of indoctrination that permeated the spirit of "brotherhood and unity", and the price they paid for comfort and safety in exchange for forgetting and not asking questions. She tries to re-create the contours of a world where being born in the city or in the countryside had a major impact on one's worldview. Drakulić identifies herself as part of the "city kids, studying fancy subjects like philosophy, art, history or psychology at the Philosophical Faculty",[71] a world very different from that of rural Balkan regions where, lacking in opportunities, the prospects for change were dim.

71 Drakulić, *They would never hurt a fly: War Criminals on Trial in the Hague* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 77.

Drakulić's main idea in this report is that despite what we may choose to believe it was not monsters who were responsible for crimes, but human beings. We, human beings, in the Balkans and outside of the Balkans are responsible for not placing trust in our fellow human beings by distancing and isolating them and looking and treating each other as enemies. It was misunderstanding, social isolation, fear and incommunicability within Yugoslav society that fuelled and permitted hatred to occur. She writes:

> If we believe their perpetrators are monsters, it is because we wish to place as great a distance as possible between us and them, to exclude them from humanity altogether. We even go so far as to say that their crimes were inhuman, as if evil (as well as good) were not part of human nature. At the bottom of such reasoning there is a syllogism: ordinary people could not have done what these monsters did; we are ordinary people, therefore we cannot commit such crimes ... But once you get closer to the real people who committed those crimes, you see that the syllogism doesn't really work … it is we, ordinary people and not some madmen, who made it possible. We were the ones who one day stopped greeting our neighbours of a different nationality, an act that the next day made possible the opening of concentration camps. We did it to one another.[72]

In choosing to discuss "monsters" Drakulić ran the risk of being accused of disloyalty and lack of patriotism. Highlighting the lack of monstrosity of the so-called monsters, Drakulić showed how humanity, tangible frail human nature, led men and women to committing crime. She turned the attention from the monsters as "others" to "us" and made the uncomfortable connection between us and them showing how differences are not that significant. Drakulić chose to look at the past not as abstract, distant or impersonal, but as close, with specific coordinates, with familiar faces, and through stories which were very much personal.

In her writings Drakulić highlights the danger of following the simplistic binary of "Us" versus "Them" and shows just how far from the truth that is. In doing so she calls into question notions such as "barbarism" and "civilization", "Western" and "Eastern". Such entities underscore their

72 Drakulić, *They would never hurt a fly,* 194.

fragility and their failure to properly explain real events and experiences in peoples' lives. She sees them as dividing lines that takes us further from historical and factual truth.

Drakulić integrates all historical experiences into personal memory seeing them as necessary and relevant for our contemporary understanding of ethics, morality, responsibility, Otherness, hatred, ethnic cleansing, xenophobia and racism. The importance she attributes to questions of individual responsibility and collective guilt is part of a larger critical stream that wishes to make the experience of the Holocaust part of European history and not historical episodes distanced to obscure concentration camps. This is not without consequences as she successfully challenges Eurocentric fallacies that atrocities, violence and injustice are a quintessential non-European phenomenon.

Interpretative frames such as trauma, victimhood or occupation all fall into the trap of misrepresentation. With these frames the nation is perceived as agency-less with individuals incapable of participating in the events. In terms of relationships of power these frames cast perpetrators on one side and powerless victims on the other. A whole range of experiences, stories, positions are left out. At best, the only subjectivities that emerge are the occasional anticommunist heroes or martyrs. Alternative personal memories can help integrate all historical episodes in a much-needed critical European history, including violence, conflict and discord, not just temporary episodes of unity. The purpose of a critical European history is not to continuously emphasize the fragmented nature of the continent, but to find a platform for re-telling Europe's past with which all European societies can resonate.

Chapter VII Reading Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu. Resistance and Accommodation

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu express ambivalent resistance as agency in their life-writing. Drakulić and Liiceanu understood and defined the nature of oppression differently and took different paths to create "spaces of freedom" against oppression. Examining what they conceive oppression to be is important to our understanding of how resistance and "dissidence" operated during the Cold War between Western and Eastern European countries. I discuss antipolitics, aesthetic autonomy, "living in truth" and "resistance through culture" as articulations of ambivalent resistance in Gabriel Liiceanu and Slavenka Drakulić's texts. I term these types of resistance "ambivalent" because of the oftentimes difficult balance these writers and other intellectuals maintained between collaboration with the regime to ensure access to cultural resources and fighting against the regime by participating in a parallel culture. This ambivalent strategy can be interpreted as a continuation of an Eastern European intellectual tradition discussed in Chapter 1 because the aim of most resistance strategies was the continuation of national culture. Although ambivalent strategies are not necessarily oppositional in nature they are nevertheless expressions of agency and represent survival solutions devised within oppressive contexts.

1 Problematizing "dissidence"

This section provides a discussion of the phenomenon of "dissidence" and of the specific "dissident discourse" that developed in socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1990. This section provides a discussion of the ways individuals and groups who disagreed with the socialist regimes engaged in dissidence. In this section I rely on Vaclav Havel's *The Power of the*

Powerless as my primary source for a discussion of the subject of "dissidence" in socialist contexts. Havel critiques what constitutes "totalitarianism", what is a socialist context and therefore how resistance can be organised efficiently. Reading Havel's writing critically provides a means for understanding how opposition and resistance were understood, articulated and put into practice.

It is in the post communist era that the term "dissident discourse" came to signify a series of independent, mostly non-related, civic individual initiatives that were not necessarily political opposition or an expression of dissidence during the socialist regime. Havel noted that it was Western European journalists and academics who applied the term "dissident" to Eastern Europeans and did so with a very loose understanding of the term.[1] According to Havel the people declared "dissidents" by foreign media did not consider themselves as dissidents and regarded the notion with scepticism. He added:

> One concept that is a constant source of confusion chiefly because it has been imported into our circumstances from circumstances that are entirely different, is the concept of an opposition … the notion of an 'opposition' more or less overlaps with the notion of 'dissent', although, of course, there are great differences in the degree that label if accepted or rejected. It depends … on how each of them understands the notion of an 'opposition'.[2]

What Western analysts of the "communist world" did not grasp was the nature of the socialist regime, how it operated, what experiences it enabled and how individuals actually devised their resistance strategies. As Havel aptly noted the "dissidents"[3] were disillusioned with the possibility of socialist reform or change of regime, a disillusionment their Western analysts failed to detect. Their efforts were extremely disparate "independent initiatives" united perhaps only by their desire

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1 Vaclav Havel et al., ed. John Keane, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 53.

2 Havel, ed. Keane, *The Power of the Powerless,* 53-6.

3 Havel, ed. Keane, 53-6.

for improvement in the quality of life that would evolve not necessarily with the regime, but despite the regime.[4]

The disparity between a Western and local understanding of dissidence is not simply a matter of misunderstanding or of taste. What individuals at the time such as Havel pursued under these "independent initiatives" runs the risk of being mis-interpreted and mis-used. Havel and some of his fellow Charter 77 peers rejected the application of foreign definitions of "dissidence" and "opposition" as they felt these notions failed to express the nature of their fight. "The powerless" refused to be subsumed under a limiting and constricting definition and challenged whenever they could the notion of "opposition" and "dissidence". As far as many of them were concerned the word "opposition" positioned their identity and struggle in a negative relation to power, as if their nature was inextricably linked to the oppressive regime. Their understanding of themselves was different. They understood themselves in positive terms, celebrating their desire to live in truth, lead authentic lives, and express their solidarity.[5]

For Havel, the term "dissident" implied a denial or a rejection of an object of reference to which the denier is tied. This constricting relation bounds the "denier" to his/her object of denial and places the object being denied in a central position. In the specific case of this discussion the object would be a "centralised socialist economy and political regime based on the premise of Marxist-Leninist doctrine". That is an extremely narrowly-defined understanding of opposition and dissidence. For this reason it was viewed as inadequate for expressing the true nature of oppression and dissatisfaction with the socialist regimes in eastern Europe. The so-called east European "dissidents" vehemently rejected this definition. As Havel put it "if they reject anything at all, then it is merely what was false and alienating in their lives, that aspect of living within a lie."[6] Therefore

[4] Havel, ed. Keane, 56.
[5] Havel, ed. Keane, 56.
[6] Havel, ed. Keane, 58.

the “dissidents” themselves challenged the foreign instrumentalization of the “dissident” struggle, which they perceived as a denial of the principles of equality and solidarity. Their “independent initiatives”, not encompassed within Western definitions, connected them to the struggles of various groups in society, the fights for defending human rights, showing solidarity with KOR workers, Charter 77 or the fight for the defence of the persecuted musicians of “The Plastic People of the Universe”.[7] Havel criticised the notion of an elite intellectual dissident movement that loses contact with and separates them from society’s various social groups and subcultures.

2 Accommodation with power

An analysis of the power relationship between the state and the population requires a discussion of agency within socialist regimes. Scholars of Communist Studies and, more recently, revisionist history literature argue that the relationship between state and population should not be regarded as one-sided. Despite oppressive policies and practices, there were periods that enabled a quasi-social pact to be negotiated between communist regime demands and individual population needs.[8] This social pact or *modus vivendi* is usually referred to as the process of accommodation and it occurred in tandem with processes of resistance to state power. As Havel aptly put it accommodation “with this system is the security of daily life at the price of ‘abdication’ of one’s own reason, conscience and responsibility, for an essential aspect of this ideology is the consignment of reason and conscience to a higher authority.”[9]

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7 KOR [In original Polish Komitet Obrony Robotników] or the Workers’ Defense Committee was a Polish civil society group founded after the June 1976 protests. Charter 77 was a civic initiative founded in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic active from 1976 to 1992. ‘The Plastic People of the Universe’ is a Czechslovak alternative rock group that suffered government repression and were forced to go underground till 1989.

8 See Apor, Horvath and Mark, *Secret Agents and the Memory of Everyday Collaboration in Communist Eastern Europe*.

9 Havel, ed. Keane, *The Power of the Powerless*, 25.

Accommodation of state demands and private needs consisted of a mix of repressive and concessive actions. This was reached by the regime allowing a degree of benign freedoms. Depending on the period, external climate and internal demands communist authorities allowed various degrees of relaxation in order to ensure the necessary consensus and stability for their regimes. The most notable example of this social pact might arguably be the Kadar-regime consensus.[10] This relaxation is especially associated with the consolidation periods following the crushing of "reformist movements' in Hungary and Czechoslovakia[11] and the Martial law in Poland[12]. For the general population accommodation was a trade-off between freedom and security. In exchange for support of and compliance with the state, the population received housing, jobs, basic health and social welfare.[13]

The intelligentsia were a social strata of intellectuals who were recruited or co-opted into the official state structure. Concessions were made to previously censored authors so that previously banned texts and subjects were re-introduced, albeit under controlled state tutelage. Accommodation with the communist regime was not a homogeneous or continuous process throughout the region and may be better described as a series of negotiations between state and society in an unbalanced power relationship. The lived reality under socialist regimes could better be described as a temporal succession of periods of ideological relaxation followed by periods of

[10] For a wider discussion see Ekiert, *The State against Society.*

[11] The reformist movement in Hungary refers to the series of events before and after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, a nation-wide uprising against the Soviet-imposed policies on the Hungarian's People Republic that lasted from 23 October 1956 till November 10th 1956. For a critical reading of the Hungarian Revolution see Stefan Auer, 'The lost treasure of the revolution. Hannah Arendt, totalitarianism, and the revolutions in central Europe: 1956, 1968, 1989', *Eurozine*, 12 November 2006. Available at https://www.eurozine.com/the-lost-treasure-of-the-revolution/. The reformist movement in Czechoslovakia refers to the series of events before and after the "Prague Spring", the period of political liberalization, mass protest against the Soviet-imposed policies on the Czechoslovak government and the Soviet invasion that ensued. The period I am referring to starts from the 5th of January 1968 till August 21st 1968. For a critical reading see Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[12] The Martial Law in socialist Poland refers to the period from 13 December 1981 to 22 July 1983 when the socialist authorities led by General of the Army Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed martial law. For a critical source see Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981: A Documentary History,* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007).

[13] See Linda J. Cook, Martin K. Dimitrov, 'The Social Contract Revisited: Evidence from Communist and State Capitalist Economies', *Europe-Asia Studies,* 69 (2017): 8–26 [Issue 1: Special Section: Authoritarian Powers: Russia and China Compared].

oppression. It did not amount to a social pact or a political compromise in the true sense of the word, as communist authorities always sought measures to secure power and crush any hotbed that posed risks to state legitimacy.[14] It is important to clarify the reality of accommodation in socialist societies in order to highlight the constraints and opportunities and assaults on individual freedom, and to acknowledge this was not absolute. Rather, through accommodation, individuals managed to craft spaces for freedom and devise strategies of resistance to navigate oppression.

In her seminal study *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* Katherine Verdery discusses the reintroduction of a nationalist frame into the process of re-fashioning a domestic model of socialism which subverted Marxist-Leninist ideology.[15] Verdery's study offers a compelling example of how an eastern European socialist regime and its ideology were subverted by intellectuals and writers in socialist Romania. Verdery challenges the notion of the state apparatus as absolute power or control. She argues that looking beyond the tenets of the Totalitarian Paradigm facilitates understanding communist regimes as complex realities that included simultaneous resistance and accommodation to state authorities.[16] Individuals participated in communist societies in spite of imbalances in power relations to advance their needs. Although their actions often involved compromise and at times led to oppressive state measures, their actions were a form of engagement.

When the needs of the authorities and those of some segments of the population coincided there was a process of modus vivendi. For instance, groups of people met state industrialization and urbanization efforts with great enthusiasm because they wished to improve their standards of living or gain financial autonomy. Sheila Fitzpatrick provides an example of the alignment of interests of

[14] See Daniel N. Nelson, 'Charisma, Control, and Coercion: The Dilemma of Communist Leadership', *Comparative Politics,* 17, 1 (1984): 1–15.
[15] See Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.
[16] See Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

the population for education and social mobility and the state's need for professional cadres.[17] Fitzpatrick argues that in the case of large-scale social reorganisation, as was the case of building socialism in the Soviet Union, the contradictions between Marxist-Leninist ideology were adapted so that the new regime could create its own 'proletariat intelligentsia'.[18] This need for compromise on the part of the regime also reflected the needs of a growing urban middle class. Socialist regimes needed the country's population to facilitate their legitimacy in order to remain in power. According to Barbu, it was thus necessary to co-opt the population and ensure social order through strategies targeted at specific groups. Some scholars, reluctant to label communism as totalitarian, use the term "participatory dictatorship".[19]

Within a wider debate on the relationship between individuals and socialist regime, theorist Alexei Yurchak advances a rather controversial thesis. He argues that while individuals' participation in state structures did help maintain the socialist regimes themselves the same participation enabled individuals to assert their agency.[20] Yurchak's point is that participation was not an act of submission to state power, but was performative. He further argues that during late socialism the deterioration of the relationship between state and subject led to a crisis within the political system. The strategies of simultaneous simulated support coupled with ridicule and critique of the state in the underground dissident circles led to a paradoxical situation in which the socialist subject experienced state power as simultaneously immutable and false.[21] He argues that individuals simulated the act of taking official symbols at face value. This phenomenon was viewed as the easiest strategy to combat or minimise oppression as it did not overtly attack or criticise the official regime and its ideology.[22] Yurchak identifies subjects in the socialist realm as activist, dissident and

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17 See Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*.

18 Fitzpatrick, *Education*, 3-4.

19 See Barbu, *Democracy and Dictatorship*.

20 Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

21 Alexei Yurchak, 'The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretense and the *Anekdot'*, *Public Culture* 9, 2, (1997), 162.

22 Yurchak, 'The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism', 162.

“normal”, the latter comprising the majority of the population who conformed and made a pact with the state. What is interesting in Yurchak’s analysis is the transformation the “normal” subject makes in his/her engagement with state power. What Yurchak describes here goes a step further than Kenneth Jowitt’s distinction between the antagonistic private and public realm in “antipolitical privatism” or the phenomenon of double self in Gail Kligman’s analysis. The relation to symbolic power by the “normal” subject is termed by Yurchak as “pretence misrecognition”, a type of behaviour adopted by the “normal” subject in the public sphere in which s/he chooses not to recognise the falsity of official claims.[23] The behaviour Yurchak describes manages to simultaneously reinforce and subvert official discourse. This happens, according to Yurchak, through the “normal” subject’s participation in two events, the official public event and the event in the parallel culture.[24] He argues that through repression, pretence and parallel cultural production “normal” subjects managed to reconcile conflicting demands in their lives.[25] What is perhaps unsettling in Yurchak’s claims is precisely the paradoxical situation in which an individual’s behaviour simultaneously sustains official discourse while also contributing to its dismantling over the course of time. Historical writing on communism that complies to a totalitarian paradigm canon tends to create neat categories in which individual behaviour can be easily contained. The participation of the population in both the reinforcement as well as subversion of power is thus difficult to explain within pre-established neat and binary categories. However, it is precisely these accounts that bring forward the knowledge that in these contexts individuality was expressed and affirmed, not abandoned. Yurchak argues that although the majority of the population did not openly contest the communist system, individuals undermined and sabotaged it due their lack of faith.[26]

[23] Yurchak, ‘The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism’, 171.
[24] Yurchak, 172.
[25] Yurchak, 174.
[26] Yurchak, 184.

The dissident corpus of work represented a series of attempts to imagine and create spaces of possibility for expression of individual freedom despite the constraints imposed by socialist societies. In some eastern European socialist societies dissidence meant establishing underground structures parallel to what the state provided. This required the establishment of an informal network of demand and supply for what the state prohibited, especially in the realm of culture. Samizdat culture, debate circles, cinema forums, unpublished artistic work were disseminated and debated within these groups.[27] It is important to highlight that many of these independent enterprises were not oppositionist in their intent, but in their effect. There was not much hope for an uprising or a revolution from within that would bring an end to socialist regimes as previous popular protests and demands for reform indicated in Budapest 1956 and in Prague 1968. These two painful events and the external legitimacy some socialist states enjoyed, such as participating in foreign trade and official state visits, left domestic populations sceptical about the value of resistance, dissidence or oppositional risk-taking efforts.

After the disillusionment of the failed reformist movements and the Soviet invasion of domestic political affairs east Europeans living in socialist societies saw confrontational or open political dissent as futile because it depended on the "free world" knowing what was happening and providing support and solidarity. For this reason acts of resistance often remained unheard despite the risks taken.[28] Local dissidents were reluctant and sceptical about engaging with an externally defined understanding of resistance. Western journalists would propose open confrontational

[27] Samizdat culture, the 'parallel polis', alternative, underground or 'second culture' and flying universities were all various facets and actions of the unofficial realm I am referring to. For a critical reading of what the concept of "parallel polis" and alternative culture meant see Vaclav Benda et al. , 'Parallel Polis, or An Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry', *Social Research,* 55, 1/2, (1988), 211–46. Regarding the phenomenon of flying universities see Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*.

[28] The outpour of memorialist literature emerging after 1990 indicated acts of resistance usually refer to individuals refusing to take part in daily demonstrations of loyalty either taking part in "trial workplace meetings" or taking part in (in)"voluntary" public marches.

political dissidence as an efficient strategy for destabilizing communist power. However domestic intellectuals and members of civil society in Romania and Hungary found this strategy inefficient in their context. For some it was inefficient because of the personal threat it posed, while for others this was the result of popular support for the repressive regime. Speaking truth to power[29] or overt confrontational dissent seemed futile after the failed reformist movements. As socialism was a system of "institutionalized lying"[30] the only resistance possible was the protection of forms of truth and individuality. Romanian exile writer Norman Manea describes this need for finding a space of freedom as:

> It was only by finding solutions, even partial ones, involving authenticity, intimacy and personality, that the self could resist the constant external pressures. In other words, it was through reading, friendship, love, belief, sex, everything that could be defended (from state ownership of our thoughts and our soul) as the last, secret, coded expression of personal wealth (and life).[31]

After the crackdown on reformists during the consolidation period in societies such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia dissidents wished to find strategies that would ensure solid change, even if this was slow and non-heroic. In this context resistance needed to bring real change to the lives of people. Resistance was understood and lived in one way by those who lived in socialism and in a different manner by those living in the capitalist West. For people living in socialist regimes resistance was concerned with finding spaces of freedom in any shape or form. This differed from understandings of resistance articulated by Western journalists in the Western capitalist countries because not only the political systems, but also the day to day realities were fundamentally different.

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[29] The concept of "speaking truth to power" can, arguably, be traced back to Classical Greece in the notion of "parrhesia". The concept has been used by numerous authors and developed in many different contexts. For a more context-related reference see Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*.

[30] For a critical reading of the notion of communist regimes as a system of organised lying see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România Raport Final*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007.

[31] Marco Cugno, trans. Patrick Camiller, "Character and Confrontation: An Interview with Norman Manea", *Salmagundi,* 113 (Winter 1997), 27.

In eastern European socialist societies the strategy of dissidence thus shifted to resistance in the areas perceived at risk. This could be the freedom to attend church, to affirm one's religious faith or personal ethics, the right to human dignity, right to education or justice. But a precarious balance needed to be kept in order to avoid a crackdown of power. Instead of positioning themselves as oppositionist and a threat to power the "dissidents" sought a new relationship with the authorities, a new configuration of the rules of the game.[32] The assault on justice in eastern European societies such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Poland by the authorities was counteracted with demands that the already-existing laws and international agreements, such as the framework of the Helsinki Process for Human Rights be respected by the socialist authorities.[33]

The assault on the arts, aesthetics and culture was met with parallel structures where artistic product could find a minimum of reception. The "parallel polis" proposed by Czech dissident Vaclav Benda was intended as a space for freedom inside a larger realm of imprisonment, a space where people could engage in small numbers with forms of expressions prohibited elsewhere. Moreover, it was envisaged as a project for building a civil society as this was understood by dissidents as a much more effective tool than fighting an impossible fight. The realm of politics was deemed a battle that could not be fought exclusively by dissidents. As such, their attention and efforts were geared towards building democracy at an individual level by containing the damages done by the communist regime and by re-stressing the importance of moral and ethical attitudes.[34] Thus ethics, democracy, culture, the arts and education were deemed sites worthy of salvaging and protecting via this parallel realm. Some dissidents, such as Vaclav Havel, hoped that with time these informal structures would inspire and cultivate a civil society, a mass of critically-engaged and empowered individuals who would eventually give up the security and comfort of what socialist regimes

32 See Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe.*

33 For a critical reading on the subject see Jiří Přibáň, *Dissidents of Law: On the 1989 Velvet Revolutions*, *Legitimations*, *Fictions of Legality and Contemporary Version of the Social Contract* (Brookfield, UK: Ashgate, 2002).

34 See Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*; Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*, (New York: The Free Press 1993).

provided in exchange for their freedom and cooperation. Havel conceptualised the real fight for freedom not through the limited mockery of the political game, but as a struggle in the wider sphere of society which he termed the "independent life" of society.[35] This was a fight for regaining power beyond the obvious terrain of political power. This is where the locus of resistance and fight for individuality was identified in a series of expressions and activities. These ranged from "self education and thinking about the world, through free creative activity and its communication to others, to the most varied free, civic attitudes, including instances of independent social self-organization. In short, it is an area in which living within the truth becomes articulate and materializes in a visible way."[36]

4 Resistance through the Aesthetic[37] or the autonomy of culture and its limits

The notion of 'resistance through the aesthetic' or 'aesthetic autonomy' is inextricably linked to the idea of either the primacy of culture over power or culture and power as antagonistic. Understood in such a loose manner the notion of aesthetic autonomy as the primacy of culture, art and aesthetics as an ideal to be pursued has been both upheld and declined by many theorists.[38] My interest in this thesis is the specific understanding of this concept in east European societies. In socialist Romania resistance through the aesthetic or aesthetic autonomy has been upheld most notably by literary writers and literary critics, mostly associated with the Writers Union.[39]

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[35] Havel, ed. Keane, *The Power of the Powerless*, 65.
[36] Havel, ed. Keane, 65.
[37] The concept and phenomenon of "Resistance through the aesthetic" in Czech, Polish, Yugoslav, Hungarian, and Romanian writers is explored by Letitia Guran, 'Aesthetics. A Modus Vivendi in Eastern Europe?' in *In Marx's Shadow*, ed. Bradatan and Oushakine, 53–71.
[38] For a general discussion on "aesthetic autonomy" in Eastern European debates see Letitia Guran, 'Aesthetics'.
[39] For a dedicated and through study on aesthetic autonomy and its challenges in the Romanian cultural field during socialism see Alex Goldiş*, Critica în tranşee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului* (Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 2011).

The centrality of culture was the ideal to be pursed. Aesthetics was connected with modernization and building distinct national cultures in eastern European societies. Most notably in Romania the literary group “Junimea”, with its leader literary critic Titu Maiorescu and later the critic Mihail Dragomirescu, was significant in promoting cultural primacy.[40] Under communism this manner of understanding culture, as always connected to the idea of the nation, was reinforced as a response to the communist regime’s ever-increasing control and restrictions over cultural production. Defenders of this viewpoint in the field of literature, such as literary critics, and writers, especially called for a stop to the intrusion of political censors in domestic cultural life. They demanded greater freedom for artistic production. Resistance to state censorship of culture was largely limited to modernist literature[41] as other genres and disciplines did not enjoy the same support. This ambivalent resistance strategy was a limitation to the Romanian Socialist Party’s intrusion into culture. It also proved to be an ethically problematic position to take as writers involved did not show solidarity with more overtly critical dissidents. The people who associated themselves with the groups committed to this approach were relatively tolerated by the regime because they presented no immediate or direct threat to power. However, the regime kept them under surveillance and did not allow them to occupy prime institutional positions from which they could manoeuvre the cultural field. They were thus treated with prudence by the nomeklatura assigned to control them. These groups were marginal in the national cultural apparatus as the distrust towards them meant they were marginalised by a regime and a system that assigned positions and rewarded only the obedient co-opted intelligentsia.

[40] Junimea was a Romanian literary society founded in Iaşi in 1863 by Titu Maiorescu, Petre P. Carp, Vasile Pogor, Theodor Rosetti and Iacob Negruzzi. For a critical reading of Junimea see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[41] See Goldiş, *Critica în tranşee.*

From this tradition comes Constantin Noica's paideic model of "Salvation through culture"[42] in the Romanian cultural space. Noica's understanding of culture and transmission of knowledge proposed leading a cultural life outside or despite the reality of politics, outside of history and the wider societal context around cultural life. In the view of Noica and his followers the communist regime was a transient phase in national history that would not be overcome by political protest. The intellectuals and cultural producers saw their role in the east European tradition as guardians of culture.[43] As such they viewed their mission not as critical intellectuals engaging with political power, but as custodians endowed with a historic role of salvaging national cultural life. The realm of politics, with its newly-established cadres and ideologically-driven apparatus in the field of culture, was regarded by the proponents of aesthetic autonomy as an attack on and distortion of the values of expert specialist knowledge.[44] Consequently their self-proclaimed defence of established values, cultural synchronism and national culture was centred around the need for professionalism and non-interference of political activism from the cultural sphere. Their space of critique and resistance was based on these beliefs. However, their position also meant an unintentional enabling and legitimising of communist regimes as their ethical compromise reinforced and sustained the continuation of the system. This approach can also be interpreted as a form of escapism and non-engagement.[45]

Gabriel Liiceanu's strategy of resistance in creating a space of freedom could arguably be called "resistance through culture"[46]. His resistance was a middle path between the primacy of culture or

[42] Some ideas pertaining to Constantin Noica's paideic model can be found in Constantin Noica, *Modelulul cultural european* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993); Noica, *Despre demnitatea Europei* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012). For secondary literature on Noica's paideic model see Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Păltiniş*; Sorin Antohi, *Războaie culturale. Idei, intelectuali, spirit public* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007).

[43] For a critical literature on intellectuals' roles in Eastern European societies see Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*; Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget'.

[44] George Konrád and Ivan Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 168.

[45] Konrád and Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals*, 168.

[46] "Resistance through culture" is one part of the larger debate on the possibility of autonomy in a socialist authoritarian regime and the participation of culture in a politicized society. Within this debate the counterpart of "resistance through culture" are voices such as that of literary critics Caius Dobrescu and Paul Cernat who suggest that aesthetic autonomy and "resistance through culture" as strategies have actually damaged critical thinking and

“life of the spirit and the ethics of “living in truth” as advocated by Havel. Liiceanu’s resistance strategy is ambivalent as it is not a full commitment to either one of these positions. The fact that Liiceanu operated in the field of philosophy did not give him leverage in negotiating between cultural freedom and political censorship. Unlike fields in the Humanities such as literary studies, philosophy was strictly policed. “Aesthetic autonomy” was thus not a fertile strategy for practical reasons as one’s discipline determined the space for negotiation. Liiceanu’s personal resistance strategy thus shifted over the course of time from the problematic path advocated by Constantin Noica during the socialist period to Vaclav Havel’s ‘living in truth’ in late socialism and post-socialism. During his apprentice years with Noica, Liiceanu opted for the escapist solution of retreating from the political realm. Later he integrated an ethical dimension to his resistance strategy based on the philosophy of “living in truth”[47] as the excerpts from Liiceanu below illustrate. Liiceanu’s resistance strategy suggests a constant struggle in which one’s ethics and integrity are tested in a context that proves challenging. He conceptualised resistance as salvaging the inner spirit, the last bastion of freedom and individuality.

Starting from his apprentice period under the mentorship of Constantin Noica during the late 1970s and early 1980s to the last decade of the socialist regime in Romania, Liiceanu changed his resistance strategy. Liiceanu was initially demoralised and viewed any type of resistance as impossible. In *Apel catre lichele* there is a shift towards other possibilities for individual freedom. In this work, which he addresses to his fellow countrymen, he describes his own complicity and acts of accommodation. Liiceanu writes himself and his complicity into the story in a desire to convey the deteriorating effects of his experience. He describes how taking part in demonstrations and show-trial meetings against his will and convictions was a source of humiliation and shame. He

the possibility of opposition in socialist contexs. For a critical reading of their arguments see Caius Dobrescu, ‘Politicile arogantei’ [The Politics of Arrogance] in *Inamicul impersonal* [Impersonal Enemy], Seria Studii culturale, Pitesti: Editura Paralela, 45 (2001); Paul Cernat, ‘Dincolo de canonul estetic’, *Observatorul cultural*, July, 3-5 (2002). For a secondary source in favour of the ‘resistance through culture’ thesis see Mircea Martin, ‘Estetismul socialist’, *Romania literara*, June 7-9, 11 (2004).

47 See Havel, ed. Keane, *The Power of the Powerless*.

wrote: “I have therefore, taken part in these things, I shut my eyes and thus taken part silently. The blackmail of using university entrance, one’s job implicitly determined our systematic complicity in our conscience which worked for years on end in our sad slaves lives.” [48] The context Liiceanu describes does not offer resistance strategies or opportunities for change. He describes a landscape in which words themselves and the act of speech were compromised and twisted within a system of institulionzalied lies that determined public and private life. For Liiceanu ethical frameworks for guiding the morality of human thought and action were compromised in the socialist context. In *Apel catre lichele* he asserts that:

> In communism, the more a lie is absurd, the more it stands a chance to become accepted as truth. The more what is said is further away from reality, the more persuasive words are. Actually, the relation changes: words strengthen reality and make it exist; they do not need the support of reality. Reality becomes so weak that it cannot contradict words any longer; real reality is insignificant and is swallowed by a new reality, the one that is projected and set up by words. ‘Communism brings with it happiness’ is a phrase true in itself as it cannot be invalidated by all the misery of a communist country.[49]

By the late 1980s he had found a partial solution to his pessimism in “resistance through culture”. However, still not satisfied with his resistance strategy, Liiceanu refined his idea of “resistance through culture” by integrating his personal ethics to articulate his “living in truth”. Liiceanu perceived newly initiated state policies as demands for conformity over individual freedom.

Both in *Ușa Interzisă* as in *O idee care ne suceşte minţile* Liiceanu describes what he calls the “everyday rat race” or the “obstacle race”. He uses this metaphoric image to convey a recurrent experience that Liiceanu utilizes in order to render the drama of everyday, spiritual, survival of the individual. Essentially, the rat or the obstacle race is conveyed using the imagery of traditional Romanian folktales. The hero of the story, the daily hero within the socialist context, has to

[48] Liiceanu, *Apel catre lichele*, 93.
[49] Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 50.

overcome a series of obstacles that trial his character and strength. Just like the heroes of folk tales the individual under a socialist regime has to prove to be witty and ingenious to survive the tests of the evil characters. In the socialist regime, the evil characters, the dragons and monsters, are likened by Liiceanu to the Securitate agents who profit from heroes failing. For those who seek a solution, an alternative path between moral compromise or straightforward activist opportunism and futile dissidence, the "everyday rat race" is inevitable. In this story Liiceanu explains the difference between a socialist and non-socialist context in terms of moral opportunities. As author-narrator Liiceanu confesses that he battles daily for moral survival in socialism in numerous ways. The only possible hero in Liiceanu's tale of socialism has to by-pass the challenge of the daily "toad-eaters" which seek to deviate the hero from his regular path in an "everyday battle between good and evil as the fight between those who wanted 'to do something' and those who shook hands to stop them."[50]

It follows from this metaphoric image in *Ușa Interzisă* and *O idee care ne suceşte minţile* that Liiceanu describes a difficult and morally-challenging situation that needs daily creative solutions . These challenges are with agents of state communism, either as censors, fellow colleagues who might be denouncers, Party secretaries assigned to overseeing activities in the workplace or even the self. These trials are endowed with tale-like symbolism in Liiceanu's description. He likened the activists and the compromised to the dragon in childrens' tales and the hero, that is the self or any individual, is Prince Charming seeking a way out. The risk to not overcoming these ethical obstacles is annihilation, either being eliminated from the healthy body of society, professionally marginalised, imprisoned, forced to exile or moral elimination from losing dignity and a sense of individuality.

[50] Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 55.

Liiceanu's personal answer to this ethically challenging situation between social-political and spiritual individual survival prompted him to search for a new space for intellectual and moral freedom. As the public societal realm was compromised for Liiceanu, by deceit and falsity, he searched for a new space external or within the self. His search coincided with Constantin Noica's parallel "school", a Romanian version of the "flying universities" or "parallel polis" Czech and Hungarian dissidents were organising in their societies for intellectuals and writers. And so Liiceanu developed his resistance strategy as a retreat from the politicised external world into the realm of the spirit, a private secluded informal school where the next generation of Romanian intellectuals were trained away from the official structures of the state. Liiceanu describes the project of Noica's School and his training as a means of re-connecting to pre-regime intellectual traditions that transcended the political borders and confines of the regime. He describes the image of Constantin Noica as a symbol of that possibility of re-connection:

> As an intellectual, he represented for us the kairos, the opportunity to open ourselves towards Europe. His teaching was always an open teaching towards the cultural values of Europe… For us, all of a sudden, any inferno became bearable since the paradise of culture was still available. … Through constant re visitation of the great sources of European culture, that nightmarish world all of sudden, bearable. A very important matter here is the fact that culture was not a mere school exercise, it did not seek to become a cult, but it represented a process of traineeship and a deeper transformation, it was *Bildung*, paidea, a building of individuality, of autonomous thinking that tore us from the world of forced and planned idiotizing… That's what Noica meant for us: the continuation of the spirit, keeping the link with the great values of European culture: the refusal to slip in that closed universe, the guarantee of an alternative.[51]

In *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș. Un model paideic în cultura umanistă* Liiceanu used the symbolic image of "Symplegades", advanced in Mircea Eliade's writing, to describe his strategy of "resistance through culture".[52] "Symplegades" is the symbol Eliade employs in order to speak of the possibilities for overcoming situations that seem impossible by entering another dimension. Here, Liiceanu likens the reality of living under communism with the series of challenges experienced by

[51] Liiceanu, *Estul naivităților noastre*, 51-2.
[52] Liiceanu, *Jurnalul*, 12.

the fable-like characters of Eliade's story on their path to reaching adulthood. The moral dilemmas of socialist life with its restrictions on freedom are translated thus by Liiceanu into Bildung, educational or formative, narratives. On this he writes:

> during our intellectual youth and our life lived here, in this part of the world, in this Romania of ours in which God has condemned us, happened like this: we lived in a perfectly closed universe, without door or windows. The miracle is that we managed to get out of it. With the help of Noica, we obtained an alternative, we could pierce through it and defeat it. We escaped in another dimension than reality, we escaped "musically" if you will, we discovered the endless music of culture, of philosophy. In those infernal years we lived philosophy, the spaces of the spirit as a state of drunkenness, as a state of continuous music.[53]

The Romanian context of post-socialism, nationalist strife, and disillusionment that followed the initial euphoria of the 1989 Revolution and the defeat of the former dissident-intellectuals in the first free elections contributed to Liiceanu re-considering his previous resistance strategy. Liiceanu reports having a personal crisis about his role as a public intellectual and his traditional "mission" as the custodian of national culture at this time. He writes:

> Before 1990 I was convinced the salvation of a world depended on the fulfilment of this cultural ritual. Now, my 'cultural' faith is withered and the illusion that a book or a grand philosophical idea can save the spirit of a community does not move me. Not even my spirit could be saved in this manner. I was actually living in full cultural apostasy and could not sacrifice the slightest part of me on the altars of the ancient gods. The truth was that the world I was living in after 'the revolution' had evacuated the classical pantheon and replaced it with the debauchery of a tired Hellenism. The vulgar priests of journalism and television had taken over the agora and the Gods had fled from the old temples of culture. It was not even clear to me at times who our faithful were anymore. It would have been fit, at the dawn of this new world, that we join a hermit life and transform the old cultural creed – the one we thought was going to save the world back then – into a glass bead game … In other words, to become perfectly useless.[54]

The crisis of values and societal re-arrangement Liiceanu describes here does not make any mention of the contrasting experiences and views of the elite and the majority population following the fall

53 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre*, 131.
54 Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 126-7.

of the regime. He decries the downfall of the traditional role of the east European public intellectual from an exclusively elitist position. Liiceanu's assessment of the postsocialist landscape is limited as he speaks from the exclusive viewpoint of an elite group. He perceives the increasingly important role of the media as an attack on the traditional responsibility of intellectuals as "truth-speakers".[55] Liiceanu thus denounces the media's intrusion into his sphere of expertise what he perceives as the role of the intelligentsia.

Public euphoria over the fall of the socialist regime in Romania and the credit attributed to dissidents for inspiring the collapse began to encounter scepticism and restraint by analysts.[56] Furthermore, the corpus of dissident discourse and lack of political experience of the previous dissidents-turned public intellectuals proved unsuccessful in the newly-organised free elections. The failure of former dissidents in the first free elections under civic alliances or platforms represented a crude awakening to the reality that the majority of the population did not share the same values as the anti-communist elite. In many ways, this clash between anticommunist values and popular nostalgia for communism, between east European anti-communist elites and the majority of the population remains un-processed. Anti-communist elites could not grasp the notion that what they perceived as a victory of dissident thought[57], freedom and democracy did not align with the population's more prosaic needs: social and economic security, a higher quality of life, capitalist consumer goods and a Western lifestyle that the crumbling socialist economies could not sustain. His account of the difficulties and poverty of the 1990s not only lacks an in-depth understanding or solidarity with the population, but he de-contextaulizes and instrumentalizes their difficulties as a phenomenon of the "slum", the periphery, in need of being saved. He writes: "we try to recreate the path to Păltiniş longing for home, Noica, our friends, haunted by cultural projects that would 'save'

[55] Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 126-7.

[56] For a secondary source see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989: Causes, Meanings, Consequences, Contemporary European History,* 18, 3, [Revisiting 1989: Causes, Course and Consequences] (2009): 271–88.

[57] For a critical source on what the dissident thought represented see Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*; Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'Fighting for the Public Sphere: Democratic Intellectuals under Postcommunism' in ed. Antohi and Tismaneanu, *Between Past and Future*.

the people there and somewhat frightened that things ‘there’, in that uncertain space between history and the slums, were happening without us.”[58]

5 A time for ethics

Recalling the last decade of communist rule, the ‘years of transition’, Liiceanu reflects on the cover of his “Jurnalul de la Păltiniş”. It has a photo of Liiceanu and his master, Constantin Noica, climbing up the mountain with their backs turned to the camera . It was censored and only reached a restricted audience at the time. For Liiceanu, that image is endowed with layers of meaning. Liiceanu reads the image of he and his master turning their backs not only from the camera, but also from their responsibilities as intellectuals towards their countrymen. Liiceanu later reads it as a gesture of guilt and distancing from worldly affairs. Liiceanu attributes a certain symbolism to that perspective in the moment of remembrance seeing his past position as an act of distancing. In both a revised edition of the Diary and in Ușa *Interzisă* Liiceanu writes about becoming increasingly dissatisfied with Noica’s position that there must be a dividing line between the philosopher and the world. Inspired by Noica’s teaching Liiceanu sought freedom in a different realm from the immediately tangible given that politics, opposition and engagement with the present seemed divisive and futile. Within a society of ‘institutionalised lies’, the socialist society, which seemed unchanging and compromised Liiceanu joined a secluded underground network which deemed spirit and culture as symbolic spaces of freedom. This group would later be known in the Romanian cultural space as the Noicans. On this he writes: “The extraordinary thing in my experience with Noica was escaping from a universe that seemed inescapable or, put otherwise, creating an alternative to a closed world.”[59] In this phase Liiceanu talks about feeling guilty on finding that

[58] Liiceanu, *Ușa Interzisă*, 139.
[59] Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre*, 130.

compromising solution, that is, personal freedom as a trade-off for absence from the responsibilities of an intellectual in the public sphere. He writes:

> we felt guilty though because we had obtained a selfish formula to happiness: we were free in a world of unfree people. None of us ever performed dissidence ...But, on the other hand, having gone through that exceptional experience we had managed to keep a certain purity, a purity of the mind and soul that enabled us after 1989 to speak... If there is a way to get back for that time when we turned our backs to history, if there is a way to get back for all the selfishness or for the powerlessness of those years then this is what's happening today when we are trying with what we've learned then and with our -still- sound mind to put at others' disposal the elements of a potential spiritual liberation.[60]

This retrospective reading is part of Liiceanu's so-called "betrayal" of his master. This represented an ethical and professional shift in Liiceanu's career as he, together with other Noica School fellows, showed signs of a need to integrate ethics and the philosophy of Vaclav Havel into their public positioning as intellectuals.

6 Antipolitics and "Living in truth"

In stark contrast to Liiceanu's notion of "resistance through culture" or "aesthetic autonomy" was the notion of "philosophy of truth" notably advocated by philosopher Jan Patočka in Czechoslovakia and the Praxis School in Yugoslavia.[61] Through the Charter 77 movement Vaclav Havel further developed Patočka's ideas into what he termed the "power of the powerless", an ethical approach to survival and resistance in the Czechoslovak socialist society. There were various streams that could be understood as belonging to the so-called "antipoltical" dissident intellectual corpus. These streams were a divided and heterogeneous series of private independent groups and

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60 Liiceanu, *Estul naivităţilor noastre*, 131-2.

61 For a critical reading of the Yugoslav Praxis Group see Gerson S. Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1977).

individual initiatives, joined together by their desire to advance a better society without compromising their efforts though by leading a futile oppositional battle.
Antipolitics as a resistance approach does not mean that it is not political "but that it provides and generates an alternative non-institutional form of politics."[62] Antipolitics was not an intellectual position of avoidance, but a reconsideration of how resistance could be organised in an efficient manner in the ever restricted and compromised public and political socialist context. For the advocates of antipolitical resistance upfront political opposition necessarily meant taking part in the game of power and not necessarily changing the rules of the game. As Barbara Falk argues "antipolitics was not—as it is sometimes interpreted— against politics, but always about doing politics differently and not simply engineering a clever end to authoritarian communism."[63]

According to antipolitical thinkers, such as György Konrád for instance, the only site from which to oppose the status quo was the public sphere, the agora, not the restricting and petty terrain of politics. Capturing the loyalty of the population, inspiring courage and the possibility of change by actively cultivating the means to do so was a battle that needed to be fought both by each individual and as a whole, as a society, not with the rules of and on the limited realm of the political game. Antipolitics was the intellectual search for autonomy of the spirit, an individual autonomy, not the pursuit of political reform or destabilizing power. Antipolitics was a resistance strategy aimed at subverting the official socialist discourse by invoking pre-communist European traditions.

Barbara Falk, in her research on dissidence in East Central European societies argues that the language and centrality of civil society in antipolitical thought was a subversive and effective means of purposely and deliberately making a "critical linkage with the tradition of Western political thought".[64] Falk draws on the Enlightenment tradition and the work of "Locke, Hegel, de

[62] Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*, 324.
[63] Falk, 341.
[64] Falk, 314

Tocqueville, Arendt, and even Plato, both in their writings and in conversation."[65] The subversive potentiality in this thought was two-fold. The claims of dissident intellectuals drew a historical connection with Europe as a philosophical, political and cultural space. Furthermore, the dissidents' emphasis on "the rights of citizens to resist arbitrary power", on the need of governments to be legitimate, the importance of population consent, the rights of the governed and legitimizing the very notion that resistance to unlawful rule was more than legitimate and in accord with European political traditions was a direct attack on methods of the communist regime and in contrast to the realities individuals were living at the time.[66] Barbara Falk, in *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* argues that intellectual antipolitics has a significant role in rebuilding civic society. For Falk antipolitics and the dissidents using this strategy to build civil society through autonomous speech and political consciousness are not ineffective or non-political. She argues that the true aim of antipolitical resistance was reclaiming the role of the individual in society. The new awareness of the individual's potential would bring about the construction of a civil society. Antipolitical dissidents made strong statements about "the boundaries of Europe, the geographical positioning of Central Europe, and in the post-1989 period, as part of its consequential "return to Europe."[67]

It is with caution that I turn to a reading of Slavenka Drakulić's antipolitical resistance strategy. The caution is because firstly, Drakulić was not, chronologically or organisationally, effectively part of antipolitical thought. Secondly, in some respects, which I address in the following, she actually stands in contrast to some of György Konrád's antipolitical ideas. Nevertheless, I suggest Drakulić's resistance strategy has much in common with the ethos of antipolitical resistance. Drakulić's emphasis on the importance of individual and collective responsibility and the need to build a civil society align her work with the larger antipolitical struggle.

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[65] Falk, 314.
[66] See Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe.*
[67] Falk, 314.

Importantly, Slavenka Drakulić does not consider herself a dissident and never claimed to be one. Neither do I claim she was a dissident. I do suggest however, that in her career as a writer, feminist, journalist and a humanist, Drakulić has become increasingly aware of the damaging effects of socialism on the political thought and its place in a healthy polis. Her writing became political towards the end of socialism. With the arrival of the so-called democratic transition, she started to adopt the traditional east European role of the public intellectual as a critical voice in her own society.

In the preface to her 1992 *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* Drakulić begins with an extract from Konrád's "To cave explorers from the West". Konrád's letter is an eloquent text that conveys the condition of the east European intellectual at the time. It is the situation of the intellectual who dreams of "Europe" at the periphery of "Europe" who is well aware of being looked down upon. Drakulić has similar views to Konrád. She deemed Konrád's letter an exemplary explanation of east European intellectuals "in-between-ness", their desire for "European-ness" and their being in "Eastern Europe". Drakulić supports and moves forward from Konrád's assessment. Drakulić expressed the need for a re-evaluation of the effects of socialism on eastern European people and societies between 1945 and 1989. She wrote about what was happening in "Eastern Europe" from within by travelling to the actual places and drawing her own conclusions. Drakulić rejected the validity of assessments about eastern European politics and life by foreign experts and analysts. In *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* Drakulić writes personally, telling the story of "her" part of the world. By approaching life and politics in eastern Europe from a grassroots level Drakulić challenges the traditional roles intellectual elites and experts have had in eastern Europe. In doing so she highlights the relevance of other experiences, not only those of the elites. By suggesting the everyday and individual experiences as a new focus Drakulić proposes a

new type of history writing: expanding history from the narrow confines of intellectuals' and elites' experiences and widening it in order to comprise a greater variety of narratives.

In her non fiction writing such as *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed, Cafe Europa. Life after Communism* and *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* Drakulić's focus on the everyday is not a banal approach. At a time when the fall of communist regimes were celebrated as the victory of dissidents Drakulić is among the few who did not celebrate. She did not experience the fall of the regime as an automatic transformation from a centralised dictatorship to a democratic society. Her scepticism and writing forces us to look beyond the celebratory optimistic discourses of the 1990s and question whether the dissidents managed to enable the cultivation of rigorous civil societies in eastern Europe. Drakulić questions whether the fall of totalitarianism actually brought about equality, freedom, responsibility, justice and welfare for people. For Drakulić the fall of the communist regime cannot be read as a tale in which the heroes defeated the oppressors. Drakulić disagrees with dissident views that exposing the system of institutionalised lies in the communist system brought it down. Her writing on the subject suggests the system was not a series of acts of oppression carried out on people, but that everyone, entire societies sustained it.

One of the few intellectuals who did not describe herself as a dissident, Drakulić confessed that she belonged to the category of intellectuals that traded their freedom for security. She wrote, "we traded our freedom for Italian shoes".[68] In *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, Drakulić distances herself from an elitist anti-communist reading of the experience of communism that is limited to merely celebrating civil society without acknowledging the social pact between the population and the regime. Drakulić does not share the dissident ideal. Her reading of the end of the regime is much less heroic than that of scholars such as Vladimir Tismaneanu. Drakulić based her assessment of the decline of the socialist regime in Yugoslavia and east European socialisms on an

[68] Drakulić, 'A Letter to My Daughter' in *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War*, 135.

analysis of the everyday peoples' lived reality, not that of the elites. She argued that the communist system failed to provide peoples' basic needs and this, not people's desire for freedom and democracy as the anticommunist narratives suggests led to its downfall. When the socialist regime did manage to provide the basic needs for its people repression was tolerated because lack of freedom was exchanged for security and liberalization. On her own pact with the regime Drakulić writes:

> my guilt or responsibility, depending on how you define it, is in believing. It is in the political naivety of my generation (even if '68 taught us how to think politically). We grew up in an already hypocritical atmosphere, not believing in the communist ideology but with the regime still there to be reckoned with. As we couldn't see the end of it we conformed, believing it was possible to change it into what we insisted on calling "socialism with a human face… What happened to us, then? Under only mild repression and with a good standard of living we in Yugoslavia didn't really suffer... people crossed the border every year just to savour the West and to buy something, perhaps as a mere gesture. But this freedom, this feeling that you are free to go if you want to, was very important to us. It seems to me now to have been a kind of a contract with the regime: we realize you are here forever, we don't like you at all but we'll compromise if you let us be, if you don't press too hard.[69]

Drakulić's resistance strategy is based on several considerations. Firstly, the relationship between politics and everyday life, secondly, the condition of women as a vulnerable group in society and finally, the concern for individual and collective responsibility in dealing with the past.

Drakulić was a member of the first Yugoslav critical feminist circle. She and those in the circle were interested in identifying the condition and struggles of women, as a vulnerable group, within Yugoslav socialist society. After the fall of communism and wars in ex-Yugoslavia, Drakulić and those in the critical feminist circle were concerned by representations of women as symbolic weapons of war and objectification of women in nationalist discourse. In the article "How women survived post-communism (and didn't laugh)", Drakulić argues that assessing the conditions of women's lives provides "the best indicator of a country's political and social situation."[70] Here

69 Drakulić, *Balkan Express*, 134-5.

70 Drakulić, "How women survived post-communism (and didn't laugh)", *Eurozine*, June 2015.

Drakulić argues, from her position as an east European intellectual and feminist, that it is necessary to take account of human experiences that are overlooked by many analyses of east European socialism. Her struggle is different to that of an anticommunist elitist. Moreover, she expresses a rather unpopular economic view as to why communism collapsed. According to Drakulić if the Socialist Party and officials had seen the degree to which people were struggling everyday they would have understood earlier that the system would collapse.[71] For Drakulić it is the:

> life experienced by women, who, down at the bottom, carried the biggest burden, taking care of children and the elderly and the whole household – all while working in full-time jobs. Each and every woman I spoke to, whether in Bulgaria or Poland, in Czechoslovakia or Hungary, could point out where communism had failed them: from shortages of food and disposable diapers to a scarcity of apartments and toilet paper. It was these banal, everyday things that defeated communism, long before 1989, and not, I am sorry to say, people's desire for freedom, human rights and democracy.[72]

In "A letter from the United States – The Critical Theory approach"[73] written in 1992, Drakulić writes about the lack of communication and understanding there is between what she perceives as "Western" feminist critique and the lives of women in socialist and post-socialist eastern European societies. Drakulić was dismayed by the lack of information her Western feminist peers had on the situation of women in Yugoslavia and eastern Europe. After being asked to provide a report on this situation Drakulić realized there is a tendency on the part of Western women journalists to subsume a wide array of heterogeneous and different life experiences under a very restrictive pre-conceived notion of what life behind the "Iron Curtain" is. She writes:

> I remember a kind of geographical map appearing in my mind: Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia too – we are talking perhaps 70 million women there, living in different regions and cultures, speaking different languages, yet all reduced to a common denominator, the system they were living under.[74]

[71] Drakulić, *How we survived communism and even laughed*, 189.
[72] Drakulić, "How women".
[73] Drakulić, "A letter from the United States – The Critical Theory approach' in *How we survived communism and even laughed,* 123–32.
[74] Drakulić, "How we survived communism and even laughed", 123.

It is not merely the issue of incommunicability between "Western" and "Eastern" feminist groups of which Drakulić complains. She argues there is an irreconcilable difference of opinion and experience that separates the groups. The distance she identifies is a gap between the east European socialist experience of emancipation and the "Western" grassroots fight. She finds it difficult to explain to her Western interlocutors and feminist peers that women's fights in eastern European societies must be fought differently due to the ideological discourse and to the different context that women there experience. Women's emancipation in eastern Europe is not possible by merely replicating the strategies used in Western countries. Within this situation of incommunicability and struggle to explain one's specific circumstance Drakulić encounters an uncomfortable and familiar situation. She interprets the situation she goes through with her Western feminist peers as similar to the familiar pattern of the foreign "Western" expert who informs eastern Europeans on how their experience should be "correctly" interpreted. Drakulić wishes to communicate the east European women's experience and struggle, but is unsuccessful in managing to properly explain it to her Western counterparts. She writes:

> I know them, the American men (and women) of the left. Talking to them always makes me feel like the worst kind of dissident, a right-wing freak (or a Republican at best), even if I consider myself an honest social democrat. For every mild criticism of life in the system I have been living under for the last forty years they look at me suspiciously… while I am speaking from 'within' the system itself, they are explaining it to me from 'without'… I resented the questions she asked me, the way she asked them, as if she didn't understand the metaphor for the system and the reality of women living in Eastern Europe… her questions are... not touching my reality… But if she didn't understand us, who will? What is the way to show her what our life – the life of women and feminists– looks like?[75]

In "How women survived post-communism (and didn't laugh)" Drakulić observed that "to be a feminist was considered to be a kind of a dissident."[76] During communism the official ideology

[75] Drakulić, "How we survived communism and even laughed", 125–8.
[76] Drakulić, "How women".

claimed that women were emancipated *de facto* via Marxist ideology and being part of the national centralised economy, which ensured their equality. This, in reality, resulted in a double injustice towards women as subjects of socialist regimes. The communist legal system theoretically guaranteed women the right to vote, own property, have an education, decide their marital status. However, socialist regimes owned women's bodies and regulated them as part of the socialist state. Gail Kligman for instance comments how in Romania during socialism women were present in the workforce just as men were, but had to comply with traditional patriarchal gender roles as well.[77] State given gender equality however did not extend to the private realm where traditional patriarchal values reigned and organised family life. Under communism, women were thus expected to work side by side with men, but with the added demands of pre-regime traditional values. In a sense, there were even less opportunities for women's solidarity to emerge under communism. This was because women themselves saw no possible alliance within society. Moreover, the existence of an official state discourse that had already predicated their *de facto* "liberation" silenced any recognition of the very need for a feminist struggle in the first place. According to communist propaganda women's fight for emancipation was accomplished. Women did not need to struggle for equality or justice anymore as they were already liberated by the socialist regime. Opinions such as those of Yugoslav feminists, Drakulić included, were deemed suspicious, foreign or bourgeois.

According to Drakulić the fall of communism did not bring the much desired freedom for women either. On the contrary, the "transition" years brought reinforced traditional conservative values with a patriarchal backlash towards women. Nationalist, ethnic and religious strife in the region postponed and denied the need for women's liberation.[78] Drakulić's stories – 'You can't drink your coffee alone', 'Makeup and other crucial questions', 'On doing laundry', 'The language of soup',

[77] See Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*.
[78] Drakulić, "How women".

'Some doubts about fur coats' and 'How we survived communism' – focus on women during the1990s because it was this epoch that affected women and men differently. As she wrote, "poverty was feminized."[79] In choosing to place women characters at the centre of her stories Drakulić avoids participating in "Orientalizing" or distancing communism as an experience. Rather, by problematizing the legacy of communism Drakulić opens up a conversation about the positive and the negative aspects in the communist and the postcommunist periods.

7 Objects speak

Drakulić often resorts to writing about daily practices and objects as a means through which to convey human emotions and make political critique. This does not make the everyday or the objects that accompany the everyday any less important. As Drakulić writes in the Introduction of her 1992 edition of *How we survived…* "The Trivial is Political". Quite often she makes an inventory of objects which include bathroom items, a doll that travels from Naples to Zagreb, food, makeup, fur coats, modern appliances and ordinary daily living spaces such as apartments. Her re-construction of the world of communism and postcommunism is not dramatically portrayed. Under an apparent facade of banality Drakulić tricks us. Her writing somehow announces that we are about to enjoy a light story on communism, perhaps witty and funny, but a light story nonetheless. From behind the ordinariness of her objects Drakulić slowly reveals the real human drama and suffering. She tells the story of the many men and women whose lives revolved around objects.[80] In these simple stories she recreates the trajectories of loss, longing and desire in the communist and postcommunist landscape. Her stories might be informative for a non-east European audience, while they enable local readers to identify and share a sense of connected-ness. Drakulić's stories are endearing as

[79] Drakulić, "How women".
[80] Drakulić, 'Pizza in Warsaw, Torte in Prague', 'On doing laundry', 'A doll that grew old', 'The strange ability of apartments to divide and multiply' in *How we survived communism and even laughed.*

they invite us to reflect on the human emotions and the relationships of humans with their material environments. From the pizza in Warsaw, torte in Prague as objects of desire to the more important question of taste and choice in capitalist and postsocialist societies Drakulić translates the communist universe to those who have not experienced it, including younger generations. Objects of course are also linked in a unique manner to social and cultural practices. For instance, the practice of accumulating in a socialist society is different to collecting in a capitalist society. Collecting in Drakulić's part of the world is not linked to the desire for property or overabundance of goods as is the case in a free market society. The need to acquire in a socialist society is connected to availability of basic goods. People in socialist societies simply never know when they might need something so they collect. Accumulating, in such a context, is simultaneously a symbol of fear and a strategy of survival. Fear over what is or might be lacking and, at the same time, a strategy devised in order to transform one's "collection" into goods should the situation require. Women's nylon stocking were re-used, once torn, to mend broken machinery or nail polish was used to mend broken nylon. Everything could be, and was, recycled. Additionally, owning a collection of just about anything also rendered the owner of that collection with a sense of ownership in a context in which so many were dispossessed of their property.

Eastern Europeans' lack of faith in the ruling authorities and fear for the future fuelled a society-wide phenomenon in eastern European socialist societies. Entire segments of the population engaged in collecting practices that went against official ideologies as they made provisions for uncertain futures.[81] The Yugoslav population met fake official propaganda that announced abundant and optimistic official statistics on national production rates and state reports about economic growth with pessimism. For Drakulić these responses are indicatives of the real relationship

[81] Drakulić, 'How we survived communism', in *How we survived communism and even laughed*, 179–90.

between state ideology and the population. According to Drakulić, the truth of the communist experience and what contributed to its collapse is to be found in these practices. On this she wrote:

> I think these drawers of my grandma's show not only how we survived communism, but why communism failed: it failed because of distrust, because of a fear for the future. True, people did collect out of poverty, a poverty in which the whole country is deprived, everybody is poor, a poverty when to be poor and deprived is a state of life that hardly ever changes, because it cannot be changed by words, declarations, promises, or threats from politicians. And, what is even more important, collecting was a necessity, because deep down nobody believed in a system that was continuously unable to provide for its citizens' basic needs for forty years or more. While leaders were accumulating words about a bright future, people were accumulating flour and sugar, jars, cups, pantyhose, old bread, corks, rope, nails, plastic bags. If the politicians had only had a chance to peek into our closets, cellars, cupboards and drawers – looking not for forbidden books or anti-state material – they would have seen the future that was in store for their wonderful plans for communism itself. But they didn't look.[82]

There are several layers of meaning attached to objects in socialism. Some of them are objects of desire. They signify the desire for plenty, wealth, security or simply belonging to that world of abundance, "Europe". Practices such as collecting objects can also express a fear for the future and uncertainty of what will come.

For Drakulić communism was neither an alien civilization that descended upon her country, nor a totalitarian system engulfing every aspect of daily life. It was her father's generation that made socialist order a daily reality, socialism is the history of her family and of her community. Drakulić does not take an elitist standpoint in criticizing the oppression endured by east Europeans under socialist regimes. She does not position herself as an intellectual, rather, she integrates multiple facets of her personhood into her writing about regime oppression. She focuses her critique on the everyday, the basic needs: housing, financial autonomy, intimacy, relationships, food, travel. Her focus on the everyday is deceiving as behind the banality of things lies her criticism of the regime. The exploration of the everyday and the "trivial" captures the failure of the system to provide basic

[82] Drakulić, 'How we survived communism and even laughed', 189.

necessities to its citizens. The denial of women's right to basic necessities is interpreted as an attempt at destroying the individual. For Drakulić the nature of oppression is homogenisation, hence the locus where resistance lies is individuality. Salvaging a sense of human dignity and the daily battle to preserve one's sense of self is a locus of resistance. While the dissident critique of communism is generally focused on creating spaces for freedom, salvaging cultural traditions or limiting the damages of communism in the realm of culture, Drakulić's works represent an effort to highlight the tension of oppression-resistance for various groups in society, not only elite intellectuals.

This chapter proposed a reading of ambivalent resistance as an expression of agency in the life-writing of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu. The chapter argued that Drakulić and Liiceanu understood and defined the nature of oppression differently and took different paths in their efforts to create "spaces of freedom" against oppression. In Gabriel Liiceanu's work ambivalent resistance is expressed through a gradual shift from aesthetic autonomy to ethics and finally to Vaclav Havel's "living in truth" and "resistance through culture". In Slavenka Drakulić's life writing resistance is conceptualized within the philosophy of antipolitics, understood by Drakulić as a quest for reclaiming individuality and a cultivating civil society. The chapter proposed a reading of resistance beyond the confining moralist binary of dissident/accomplice suggesting that whatever their paths both Drakulić and Liiceanu have devised resistance strategies that should be read as expressions of agency in socialist contexts.

Conclusion

This thesis critically examined of the notion of “European-ness”, “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism” through an investigation into the self-representation of east European writers whose works challenged the very construction of the idea of “Europe”. Using Edward Said’s critique of Western representations of the “East” in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* this thesis has proposed a framework that opens up our understanding of the (post)socialist eastern European landscape beyond the problematic legacy of the discourses of “European-ness”, “Eastern Europe” and “Balkanism”.

The thesis focused on how belonging is articulated in these imagined spaces, how elements from various traditions continue to shape self-identification in eastern Europe and, in particular, how intellectuals have engaged with discourses about “Europe”. The argument has been made that externally-produced knowledge about the “East” influenced local self-perceptions and self-representations to such an extent that there has been a process of internalization of “Otherness” by eastern European intellectuals.

This thesis has questioned the framework that previous paradigms, canons and disciplines such as Area Studies, (Post)communism, Transition and Totalitarianism Studies have imposed on studying subjectivities and agency in eastern Europe. An argument has been made that the legacy of the notion of “Europe” as an ideal together with the shortcomings of the Totalitarian paradigm have dominated and negatively altered our understanding of complex and ambiguous individual experiences, subjectivities and resistance under communism. The thesis argued that employing restricted analytic frames, including the Totalitarian paradigm, to interrogate what “Europe” means impedes a nuanced knowledge of the subject.

The thesis contends that a postcolonial critique offers another way of asking old research questions about the region of eastern Europe in a distinctly new way. This research suggests that postcolonial and postcommunist studies should be in dialogue because they share common objectives in as much as both aim to understand a pre-regime as well as a post-regime state. The pre-regime state is usually concerned with the ways in which the oppressed community or nation is defined whereas the post-regime state poses challenges for projects of societal rebuilding. The nature, practices and enduring legacies of the previous regime, including issues regarding trauma and memory are all major concerns to be reckoned with.

With this in mind the thesis has explored subjectivity, memory and agency in the symbolic geography of “Eastern Europe”. The thesis argued that the dynamics of the region have produced distinctly new subject positions and articulations of resistance as agency. Whereas previous investigations of communist and postcommunist subjectivities have operated on the assumption that the discursive hegemony imposed by the regime produced a closed field of articulations of subjectivity, this thesis contends that the socialist project in reality produced a much richer complex and sometimes ambivalent landscape of subjectivities. I have argued that there was a gap between socialist ideology that called for social “uniformization”, erasure of difference and individuality and the reality of the socialist experience that included social mobility and differentiation. Incongruity lay at the heart of the socialist experience. The thesis integrated this acknowledgement into an expanded understanding of socialist subjectivities and in doing so exposes a wider landscape of experience.

The thesis reveals that local responses to the discourse of “Europe” and “Eastern Europe” are more diverse than previous research has shown and require study. Through a critical reading of Slavenka Drakulić and Gabriel Liiceanu’s life-writing or semi-autobiographical texts the thesis opened up a wider discussion on ambivalent subjectivity and resistance. The thesis revealed that socialist and

postsocialist subjectivities are characterised by a deep ambivalence, a constant (re)negotiation within a framework of constraints and opportunities.

Re-thinking (post)socialist subjectivities

The critical reading of Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts considered subjectivity in the communist eastern European context beyond the simplistic binary of oppressive ideology on the one side and individual difference on the other. These authors' life writing reveals that subjectivities are constituted at the intersection of both constraints and possibilities. The thesis found that individuals, including Drakulić and Liiceanu, transform externally-imposed political restrictions to best suit their individual interests and expressions of selfhood. Through a discussion of these writers' work, the thesis explored expressions of ambivalent subjectivity with reference to the split or divided self, the re-emerging trope of the "double" in life-writing and the role and effects of the coping mechanisms of dissimulation and "antipolitical privatism". The thesis discussed the image of the "ketman" together with the image of the "mask" in Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts. Perhaps the most complex instance of ambivalent subjectivity, was the two writers' fear of losing the unity of self, of fragmentation, annulment of self or losing authenticity; the "ketman". For each writer, the requirement to perform public roles and display loyalty towards the regime threatened the stability of the self. The "ketman" is a device through which the narrators expressed fear of being unmasked or of turning into a different persona.

The "ketman" or "mask" in Liiceanu's writing highlighted a certain duality or ambivalent subjectivity. On the one hand, "ketman" or the "mask" can be read as an expression of agency, while on the other hand, it conceals an ever present lack of control. The coping strategies cultivated

to ensure the survival of the self, threatened to turn against the very agent who devised them. The "ketman" appears in the two writers' texts because they foreground sites of agency, while also identifying the tension between an oppressive external environment and the efforts of the self to sustain personhood. The "mask" is present in Drakulić's writing as a fear of something hiding behind the surface of things, a fear of falsity, fragility behind the appearance of solidity and security. This threat or fear is apparent in Drakulić's life and that of her homeland through social alienation, the rhetoric of hate and fear of the Other.

A critical reading of Drakulić and Liiceanu's texts shows that their use of the "mask", a double or a split sense of self, is a metaphor for fear of falsity, lie, the inauthentic. The mask both writers depict their narrators, and themselves, wearing in front of others, suggests an ever-present threat in the background, menacing to ruin their precarious existence. In an effort to consolidate the self and resolve their crises both writers use multiple voices to represent other parts of the self.

Liiceanu uses the stories of others to reflect and find a desired version of himself while Drakulić gives voice to the experiences of the silent and vulnerable in society. For Drakulić this power, located in the persona of the narrator, is an attempt to impose her version of truth. To this end she communicates to a wider audience, both domestic as well as international, to her generation and to younger generations, the plurality of perspectives and stories on the recent past. For Liiceanu the position of writer-creator provides him the opportunity to redress past silence. Writing about the self allows him to reclaim individuality, and a sense of the lost self after suppression of the individual through nationalist, cultural or political pressures during and after the fall of the regime. Both writers use their personal stories to connect to wider phenomena such as the collective experience of trauma in repressive societies, ultra-nationalist postcommunist contexts, and a sense of loss and confusion in rapidly changing contexts.

Based on several considerations, the thesis argued that both writers are ambivalent about writing the self within a symbolic geography at the periphery of “Europe”. Their writing comes from the intersection of a lost homeland, rejected national belonging, and a desire to be cosmopolitan or transnational. Neither “Western” nor “Eastern”, the writers speak from and to both audiences. Neither exilic, nor dissident both Drakulić and Liiceanu established themselves as critical public voices within a local and transnational audience.

The thesis discussed the tension that lies at the heart of the two writers’ texts. This is a tension between the desire for “Europe” as an ideal and the need to escape the discursive space of “Eastern Europe” or the “Balkans”. The notions of space, place and home(land) are conceptualized in their texts in terms of a double bind. There are obvious efforts to limit and contain the pressures of being confined to a nation, while at the same time they desire to belong to an idealized community. This tension plays out in a problematic east European space where individuals reclaiming identity need to address enduring legacies of epistemic domination, “nesting Orientalism”, internalised Otherness and competing identity markers. There are several considerations to be taken into account when reading Drakulić and Liiceanu’s texts. On the one hand they reinforce binary understandings of “West” and “East”, but on the other hand, by revealing the tensions and incongruities of simultaneous acceptance and rejection, they manage to problematize the discourse of “Europe” and “Eastern Europe”. Drakulić and Liiceanu’s life-writing reveals the experience of inhabiting the “Eastern European” space and being rejected by an ideal “West”.

Exploring the theme of “home” in life-writing revealed that belonging to a community, nation or the symbolic region of “Eastern Europe” is connected to feelings of conflict and shame. For instance, belong to a homeland is a process of often difficult and unresolved negotiation in Liiceanu’s writing. The writer finds himself in a space between an imagined “Fatherland” that bears little connection to a real territory and a longed-for nostalgic “Motherland” located in the past.

"Motherland" is a symbolic and temporal notion of home. The city and his childhood neighbourhood are the physical spaces on which Liiceanu bases his notion of home, a safe haven within a world of enmity. The second notion of home, "Fatherland" is highly ambivalent for Liiceanu. On the one hand, the "real" fatherland is distanced and rejected as inferior and backward. On the other hand, Liiceanu has forged a personal notion of "small fatherland" as a means of reclaiming belonging to a home that does not produce feelings of shame. His notion of "small fatherland" is in no way a celebration of nativisim, called "protochronism" or nationalism in Romania. Despite Liiceanu's reinforcement of problematic Eurocentric notions his "small fatherland" can be interpreted as an effort to break the binary of West-East. His solution is a spiritually defined and constructed homeland freed from a political and contextual homeland. In order to reconcile the tension of being "Othered" and becoming an agent of Eurocentrism himself, Liiceanu constructs an impossible image of his home in eastern Europe. He invents "profound Romania", a land invisible to an unknowing gaze, but experienced by an alleged community of knowledgeable insiders.

Slavenka Drakulić's writing on Europe, "European-ness", Western and Eastern Europe is a curious mix of reinforcing binary notions of an inherently good West – bad East and a rejection of the legacy of a constructed "Eastern Europe" and "Balkanism". Drakulić walks a thin line between spectator and spectacle. Drakulić's writing takes readers on a voyage either back in time or through the territories of eastern Europe in an effort to reconcile the land with its history. Travelling through and writing from various eastern European territories she wishes to liberate herself from national, ethnic or regional restricting markers of identity. However, she articulates two distinct communities – Eastern and Western – even as she aimed to erase the divide between the two, thus upholding those very distinctions.

A reconsideration of the recent past

The thesis argued that intellectuals writing about the self in the postcommunist era and representing the past are participating in a process of negotiation on European and eastern European memory. The thesis has interpreted Drakulić and Liiceanu's engagement with memory as acts of negotiating collective memory, revision of the recent past and the place of east European societies in recent history. The two writers' memory texts offer insight into multiple aspects of human experience under communism in eastern Europe that remain marginal in the mainstream production of European "collective memory".

Reading Liiceanu's texts on memory and the recent past has highlighted a rift between Western European memory and Eastern Europe. My reading revealed "double standards" in contemporary European public memory. The writer concludes with a demand to focus on the memory of the Gulag and the Shoah equally. Similarly to other central and east European writers before him, Liiceanu writes about the recent past and the communist experience in his society in terms of a foreign occupation. His Orientalizes communism as "an alien invasion" rather than write about it as an integrated historical episode in his society's history. Liiceanu's Eurocentrism and internalisation of Otherness in understanding and conveying the recent past resembles the writings of Ceslaw Milosz and Milan Kundera.

Drakulić brings to the fore marginal memory narratives that official European records failed to capture, including the stories of suffering in the Balkans, forced displacements, the least-known experience of the aggressors in the Yugoslav wars, and the lack of communication between generations that undermines the possibility of people learning lessons from the past. Drakulić's memory work is an effort to save the past from being silenced. Growing up with the reality of

propaganda, invented foundational legends and myths, Drakulić's need for truth is fundamental. She observes how new orders, new regimes have a tendency to be built on amnesia and denial of the effects of the past on the present. Her memory work reflects on the dangers of distancing the past, the memory of the Shoah, collective responsibility, and remembering the shared experiences of communism. Memory is crucial in both Liiceanu and Drakulić's work. They both take on the east European traditional understanding of the role of the intellectual as a custodian of memory, a truth-seeking and truth-telling agent in the service of the nation.

Revisiting resistance

Finally, this thesis has interpreted articulations of resistance as expressions of agency. Whereas previous investigations on resistance in communist regimes considered resistance in moral terms this thesis considers resistance as agency, an affirmation of individuality and selfhood. The thesis considered the need to move beyond a simplistic image of the oppressive state/powerless individual and recognise the previously screened out expressions of agency. Consequently, the thesis discussed a wide array of expressions of ambivalent resistance ranging from antipolitics, aesthetic autonomy, "living in truth" and "resistance through culture". Resistance is conceptualised in relation to accommodation with power. The thesis found that resistance strategies evolved and were sensitive to both internal and external changes. For instance, in Liiceanu's case there is a shift from the escapist solution of "resistance through culture" to an integration of ethics into the philosophical thought and understanding of survival. Liiceanu's resistance strategy changes over time from a demoralised pessimistic stance thinking that no form of resistance could emerge to thinking in the last decade of communism that a partial solution exists. In doing so he conceptualised "resistance through culture", as a manner of resisting state oppression. Drakulić gradually shifted from her self-confessed critique of accommodation and compromise with power to a recognition of individual

and collective responsibility, as she takes a public stance against Croat nationalism and integrates the Shoah as a historic episode of "negative memory". Drakulić's resistance strategy joins the ethos of antipolitical resistance, emphasizing the need for responsibility, bearing witness to past historical events and engaging in memory work on the recent past. Drakulić's resistance strategy is based on the relationship between politics and everyday life, the condition of women as a vulnerable group in society and, finally, the concern with individual and collective responsibility as an ethical way of dealing with the memory of the recent past. For Drakulić salvaging a sense of human dignity and the daily battle to preserve one's sense of self became a locus of resistance.

This thesis was written in the hope that temporal distance has granted the much-need perspective on an investigation into eastern Europe and its recent past. In this sense the thesis proposed a departure from scholarship carried out in the context of the 1990s former socialist east European research climate. The canons of various academic paradigms and political factors have shaped our study of eastern European societies and the dynamics of the region. The turbulent years that followed the fall of socialist regimes in the region have produced their own myths. This thesis, hopefully, offers a complex reading of articulations of subjectivity and positions in (post)socialist Europe that go beyond the simplistic readings of the dissident anticommunist legacy, a Totalitarian paradigm inspired reading of communism. I have argued that an investigation into the connection between "Europe" and eastern Europe after the Cold War and the fall of communism provides a much needed opportunity to re-question the notion of "Europe". Now that we have gained some distance from the myths of the "transition period" we can re-interrogate "Europe" and avoid the distorting effects and pitfalls of readings based on Eurocentric notions of Europe, the national canon, the "east European exceptionalism" and nativist perspectives.

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