Contesting Illusions

History and Intellectual Class Struggle in Post-Communist Romania

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Abstract

This is a dialectical and anthropological exploration of Romanian anti-communism. On the one hand it traces its hegemonic domination in relation to the politics of writing history and memory practices after communism, and on the other hand it points out how struggles against the hegemony of anti-communism enabled the emergence of critical and leftist politics for the present with a view to open up future possibilities. By employing the category of class and by using the tools of historical anthropology, this dissertation shows how highly political class struggles have been depoliticized and culturalized through the discourse of anti-communism. It also shows how struggles around intellectual and cultural production have in fact become vehicle for concrete processes of class formation and re-articulation.

This research offers then a different understanding of post-communism and of the social phenomena associated with the umbrella term "transition". First, at a theoretical level, I embed the communist experience in the wider dynamics of modernity and capitalism in Eastern Europe in the past two centuries. Second, instead of considering transition as a historical period leading from communism to capitalism, I regard it as a historical problem nested within three overlapping transformations: 1) the peripheral incorporation of the post-communist region after 1989 into contemporary global regimes of production, accumulation and division of labor; 2) the de-structuration of industrial production in the northern hemisphere and its attendant economic, social and political institutions – a phenomenon of which the former eastern bloc is a part; 3) the exhaustion of the basic fundaments of western modernity of which the collapse of Soviet modernity was only an early symptom, albeit a crucial one.

On this background I insert my local Romanian case. I show how anti-communism despite being the hegemonic ideology of transition and an intellectual construction, emerged in fact from the class struggle undergirding the communist regime, opposing the technical and humanist intelligentsia to the party apparatchiks. Anti-communism was salient for the former to make political claims against the latter in the post-1989 articulation of this ongoing struggle, while anti-communism displaced this class struggle as a struggle against corruption and for western integration. The condemnation of communism as illegitimate and criminal by the Romanian Presidential Commission for the Analysis and Condemnation of Communism in 2006, prior to the country's EU accession, officialized and institutionalized anti-communism as the dominant framework in relation to the communist past. This hegemony was evident in the field of history writing where anti-communism put forward a hybrid construction, which I call "history-as-memory". On the terrain of memory practices, the pedagogy of memory organized by anti-communism constructed nostalgia as a disease of the popular classes, considered the museum of communism as a definitive sign of overcoming this nostalgia, and inscribed the secret police archive with the power to generate truth about the past.

But this hegemony did not remain unchallenged. A rebel intellectual group of friends from a younger cohort, not affiliated with state and party power, put together a

volume of critical readings of the condemnation report through which they signaled the emergence of a new generation willing to give voice to its own experiences of the past and articulate its own politics for the present and future. I show that this anti-hegemonic struggle emerged from a common generational biographical trajectory rooted in the developmentalist logic and achievements of communism and unfolding across overlapping crises of capitalism in the last four decades. This legacy, received critically, enabled a different perspective on communism and of the transition period in which issues related to transition injustices, emerging from the constant struggles for livelihood and reproduction, came to the fore and led to the articulation of a critical stance expressed in an idiom of class. This political breakthrough made possible the articulation, after half a century, of a distinct local leftist movement, emerging from local struggles but enabled and crystallized by global dynamics leading to and following the financial meltdown of 2008.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments are undeniably the salient mark of American academia. In other intellectual and academic traditions one's intellectual debt is never expressed directly at the forefront of the text but carefully embedded – one might say hidden – in the text itself. This requires an extra hermeneutical effort on behalf of the reader to trace connections, overlapping strands of arguments and influences. Reading is thus doubled up by a detective effort.

In contrast, American acknowledgments fully disclose from the beginning the main culprits. They represent the positive affirmation of the author as an individual within a network of academic mentors, peers, traditions and institutions, similar to a business card, offering identity, affiliation and prestige by marking belonging to a community. However, this belonging is also the denial of the individual author qua author by reminding that creation is never a singular act of will and "genius", but a social act emerging in various forms of interactions, influences, confluences and circumstances. Acknowledgments appear then as a sign of genuine democracy and as a healthy sign of intellectual sense of proportion. From this perspective, I am really honored to write these acknowledgments and express my gratitude.

This dissertation would have not been possible without the expert supervision of Don Kalb. His help was crucial in at least two ways. First, he believed from the beginning in this project and assisted me throughout its many changes of focus and emphasis. He suggested openings whenever I reached stumbling blocks and brought me back to firm ground whenever I went ahead of myself. Secondly, he was a close but discreet supervisor, putting up with my style of work and allowing for my ideas to reach fruition. I am also grateful for his encouragement to think big and theoretically while always pressing me to remain specific and historically minded. Moreover, he was from the very beginning a friend and promoter of the Romanian emerging left movement I describe in this dissertation, thus encouraging through his own personal example a synthesis of academic commitment and political engagement. Needless to say, all the exaggerations, slips of hand and mistakes in this dissertation are mine.

Katherine Verdery kindly mentored me during my spells at the Graduate Center of City University of New York. My intellectual debt to her precedes the moment I met her in person since her work on Romania outlined for me the direction of an intellectual engagement and the standard of a research embedded in Romania but infused with the ambition of saying something of larger relevance. At GC CUNY I was able to crystalize my thinking about the secret police archive in conversations with her and to engage a vast anthropological literature on post-communism during her excellently crafted class on the topic.

Also at GC CUNY I was lucky to work with late Neil Smith. His class on "Urban revolutions" was an intellectual tour de force and the extensive conversations with him on Lenin, Foucault and capitalism were extremely rewarding. This is when I crystalized some of the ideas I put forward in this dissertation. He is sorely missed.

Introduction: Overlapping Transitions

This dissertation is about the class politics of writing history and the history of class politics in modern Romania. I demystify the 1989 moment in Eastern Europe by offering both a longer temporal perspective but also a more global outlook. Therefore, I make a case for post-communism as a historical problem and not simply as a historical period.[1]

More than two decades after 1989 it is perhaps time to ask different questions about the particular nature of post-communism and its wider significance. Instead of simply seeing post-communism as a set of radical neoliberal transformations of the former communist states and hence continue to employ a linear framework of analysis centered around key political moments such as the 1989 events, I look at post-communism as a political-ideological and cultural formation. I seek to understand the struggles, the material and discursive resources, the institutions and actors, both local and global, both past and present, which collectively shape the contours of this political formation. I explore the dialectical process in which highly political class struggles are depoliticized and culturalized, while at the very same time struggles that seem confined to the level of cultural production and intellectual debates (such as the writing of history, museums, or nostalgia), dovetail in fact very concrete processes of class formation and re-articulation.

Consequently, my research offers a different understanding of post-communism and of the social phenomena associated with the umbrella term "transition". First, at a theoretical level, I embed the communist experience in the wider dynamics of modernity and capitalism in Eastern Europe in the past two centuries.[2] Rather than seeing communism as a distinct historical period with salient features and bounded margins, I suggest a view that links it with the global experience of capitalism.[3] What enables me to do so is the observation that communism far from abolishing classes, in fact created them in the process of fast industrialization that entailed ultimately the transformation of backward peasants into industrial waged workers.[4]

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[1] I use the term "communism" in this dissertation for various reasons. First, it allows me to express better the core of my argument, namely the functioning of "anti-communism". Terms like "state socialism" would not make the link clear. Secondly, these regimes aimed to reach communism, that dialectical surpassing of capitalism. This allows distinguishing between socialism and communism instead of simply considering them interchangeable terms. Finally, by employing the term "communism" I am to also explore its possibilities in the present, as I do in Chapter six. Therefore, it is also a political and polemical designation.

[2] A similar effort was employed by Andrew Janos, though I diverge from his perspective since I seek a historical materialist understanding Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World : The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[3] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century : Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*, "New and updated ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 2010).; Kajsa Ekholm Friedman and Jonathan Friedman, *Modernities, Class, and the Contradictions of Globalization : The Anthropology of Global Systems* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008). Don Kalb, "From Flows to Violence: Politics and Knowledge in the Debates on Globalization and Empire," *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 2 (2005).

[4] Gaspar Miklos Tamas, "Un Capitalism Pur Și Simplu," in *Genealogii Ale Postcomunismului*(Cluj: Idea, 2009).

I regard historical development as driven by the formation, consolidation and struggles of classes and class segments. In contrast to the totalitarian paradigm that reduces the experience of communism to a conflict between the party and the people,[5] I show that communism was essentially structured by class conflicts. [6] For, communism produced not only waged industrial laborers but also a class of technical and humanist intelligentsia and the interplay of these classes, and the mediation of the party nomenklatura, fundamentally shaped the post-war history of the communist regimes with important consequences prior to and after 1989.[7] Therefore, I argue that what collapsed in 1989 was not communism but the particular form of the Party-State, a political device aimed at centralizing power in order to quickly modernize and industrialize the peripheral and agrarian societies of Eastern Europe.[8]

This theoretical perspective has important consequences for the manner in which I regard the transition period. Rather than emphasizing breaks, I show continuities, particularly in terms of class trajectories and historical becoming. I claim that the post-communist transition is the continuation of the class struggle already shaping communism, this time in a context fully connected to global patterns of capital accumulation and in the absence of the Party-State.[9] Moreover, I diverge from mainstream interpretations of the transition that consider it a moment of embracing western capitalism and market relations after the communist experience, in a context dominated by neoliberalism.[10] Rather, I show how the communist experience was already capitalist in nature and thoroughly linked with global capitalist dynamics well before 1989.[11] This in turn allows me to show that explanations of neoliberalism, such as those promoted by David Harvey, are important but of limited relevance since they remain too western centered and lack a proper understanding of Eastern European communism in the global dynamics of capitalism.[12]

Against the narrow focus on transition and neoliberalism, I propose a view of three overlapping transitions that I will discuss below at length. First, I identify a local transition after 1989 from the monopoly of the Party-State and its apparatchiks to the monopoly of the post-ideological technocrats linked with global capital.[13] What is

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[5] There is a vast literature here, but see the classic Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New ed., A Harvest Book, (New York,: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973)

[6] Silviu Brucan, *Pluralism and Social Conflict : A Social Analysis of the Communist World* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

[7] Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Age of Transition : Trajectory of the World-System 1945-2025* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.
Leichhardt, NSW, Australia: Zed Books ;
Pluto Press, 1996).

[8] Sylvain Lazarus, Lenin and the Party, 1902 – November 1917 in *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

[9] Georgi M. Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus : A World-System Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[10] Elizabeth Cullen Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell. 2004. Ruth Ellen Mandel and Caroline Humphrey, *Markets and Moralities : Ethnographies of Postsocialism* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Berg, 2002).

[11] Christopher K. Chase-Dunn, *Socialist States in the World-System*, Sage Focus Editions (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982).

[12] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[13] Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi, and Eleanor R. Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists : Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (London ; New York: Verso, 1998). Jan Drahokoupil, *Globalization and the State in Central and Eastern Europe : The Politics of Foreign*

salient in this transition is that the developmentalist goals of the communist regime were replaced by the civilizational discourse of the new technocratic class, clearly manifested in the hegemony of the "integration" discourse and the attendant class bias it entailed.[14]

Second, I identify a global transition from a mode of production and accumulation primarily based on industrial relations to something else, at least in the northern hemisphere. While Don Kalb showed that the number of workers directly employed in western dominated global factories tripled in the past decades[15], the west and the east have seen ample processes of de-industrialization and decomposition of the traditional industrial working classes. The post-communist experience is inextricably part of this shift and the amplitude and implications suggested by this view are more wide-ranging than what a focus on neoliberalism can suggest. It is, indeed, the exhaustion of a 200 years process.[16] But far from suggesting in any way the intellectually weak thesis of *tout court* de-industrialization and service-based transformation of the global economy,[17] I nonetheless want to point out an important change in global patterns of production and accumulation that needs to be properly specified theoretically and historically.

Thirdly, and interconnected, following a suggestion from Immanuel Wallerstein, I also speak of a transition from the basic fundaments defining Western modernity, to principles that are yet to be fully crystalized.[18] I offer a hint to the plausible forms these articulations might take by examining the writing of history at the "end of history" –that is, the type of historiography engendered by the fall of communism.[19]

This view, in turn, enables me to throw different lights on some of the social, cultural and intellectual processes of the transition. As such, the topic of anti-communism figures prominently in this dissertation, understood as a complex assemblage of class, political, ideological and cultural interests and condensing a series of nested struggles, political claims and epistemic functions. By showing how anti-communism functioned as the spontaneous ideology of the governing class of transition, I analyze some of its salient features, articulations and configurations.[20]

Direct Investment, Basees/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009).

[14] Attila Melegh, *On the East-West Slope : Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Eastern Europe*, 1st ed. (New York: Central European University Press, 2006).

[15] Don Kalb, "Class and the New Anthropological Holism," in *Anthropologies of Class*, ed. Carrier and Kalb(forthcoming).

[16] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes : The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London
New York: Michael Joseph ;
Viking Penguin, 1994).

[17] An idea informing authors as different as Richard Florida and Hardt and Negri.

[18] Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Age of Transition : Trajectory of the World-System 1945-2025* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

[19] For a different take on the issue of history at the end of history see Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London ; New York: Verso, 1992).

[20] Following the work of Kees van der Pijl I make a distinction between ruling classes and governing classes. The former have the global power and control, while the latter can only act as their comprador local allies. This is important because it also highlights the importance of anti-communism locally, as a means to strengthen the power (or to act as substitute of the lack of it) of the governing class. See Kees van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London: Verso, 1984). I thank Don Kalb for suggesting this track of thinking.

Primarily, I will do so in relation to the field of history-writing after 1989 as a contentious field in which official and institutional expertize about the communist past was produced, reproduced and, of course, contested. There, I show how anti-communism produced a form of epistemic knowledge I call *history-as-memory*, specific to the triumphalist belief of anti-communism in the end of history. In this mode of writing, history and memory are fused together and history acquires the structure of memory of a particular kind of historical experience. Knowledge, about the past becomes a form of revelation and divination.

Strictly connected to the field of history-writing, I examine the practice of opening the archives of the former secret police. In post-communism, these files have been endowed with the possibility of revealing the truth about the past. They generated a lot of societal struggles and frictions and were the cause of many public scandals. In contrast to the anti-communist discourse that regards these files as an archive of terror, I offer a meta-historical interpretation of the secret police as a form of knowledge in the hands of the party and hence integrally part of the class struggles during and after communism.

But anti-communism as a hegemonic discourse was hardly confined to a single sphere of life. Primarily, it infused post-communist politics, a fact best discernable in the *2006 Romanian Presidential Commission for the Analysis and Condemnation of Communist Dictatorship* (hereafter condemnation commission) that condemned communism as "illegitimate and criminal". Far from being a simple intellectual construction of the anti-communist intellectuals and dissidents, anti-communism was a powerful hegemonic ideological matrix that structured the entire experience of transition, enabling only a certain range of political options while disabling and repressing others, especially the possibility for leftist politics. This makes the site of my investigation an important one for the manner in which anti-communism came to full fruition.

My research offers the possibility to investigate the formation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constructions, in relation to but also outside state institutions. I operate with a relational definition of hegemony that conceives it as a field of struggle, as an active terrain of contestation linked with everyday politics, fundamentally shaping human actions without, however, fully determining them.[21]

In addition, anti-communism strongly infused memory practices, pedagogical efforts and popular culture in relation to the communist past. In this dissertation I focus on two central aspects: the obsession with the museum of communism that should portray the horrors of the past and the debates about nostalgia for the communist past, considered to be obliterating those horrors. I show how these two issues are central to the class struggle of the transition; a struggle displaced though as cultural difference

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[21] G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation : Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). Gavin A. Smith, *Confronting the Present : Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology*, Global Issues, (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 1999). Don Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950*, Comparative and International Working-Class History (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). Of course, what all these author share is a more complex of Gramsci's concept of hegemony at the interstices of state and civil society.

between the "civilized", European segments of the population and the "uncivilized", backward segments, still caught up in the past.[22] While this duality sustains claims for more reforms and transformations of the society with a view to becoming "western", it is also the main mechanism for processes of self-colonization and subordination.

Furthermore, I show how precisely the field of history writing and the debates surrounding communism, post-communism and anti-communism was the field in which alternative and counter-hegemonic claims emerged. In the last two chapters of this dissertation I discuss the struggles, historical trajectories, structural biographies and politics of a group of intellectual friends that put together a coherent response to the dominance of anti-communist ideology after 1989. I show that this gesture emerged out of a shared class background and sensibility, while, in turn, it suggested the articulation of a class compass necessary to navigate not only the outcomes of the post-1989 transition, but the dynamics of the contemporary capitalist world more generally.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this dissertation *is* about Romania. Of course, it aims to speak about larger issues outside the narrow focus of post-communism and the area study of Eastern Europe, but I want to do so by offering a different perspective about the site of my investigation too. This emerges from my belief that, analytically, the country is still trapped into the overwhelming shadow of Ceaușescu, popularly depicted as a bloody dictator surrounded by equally vicious secret police spies. This is nothing else but a modern day imperial construction that brings to mind a similar one from a century ago: that of the bloodthirsty Dracula and his vampires.

The idea of Romanian exceptionalism in the Eastern Bloc is based on this ideological construction, offering ready-made explanations. Paradoxically, Ceaușescu himself encouraged it from the late 1960s onwards, externally through his foreign policy of distancing from Moscow, and internally through an insane nationalist historiography. From this perspective, we still live under his spell. By contrast, I believe that one can gather a more analytical perspective by going beyond the fixation with Ceaușescu and thoroughly placing the trajectory of the country in the last two centuries in a global perspective and in a more refined historical framework.

These are the broad contours and main claims of this dissertation. In what follows I will embed my research into the current debates in the field of post-communism and its many ramifications, by pointing out my presuppositions, divergences and intellectual debts. I will do so in a reflexive way, by tracing back theoretically and analytically the very making of this dissertation.

I. From Topic to Optic and Back

Anti-communism, History Writing and Biography
This research started with a puzzle. While the ideology of anti-communism has been very strong in the post-communist Eastern European context, it never received proper attention in the academic field of post-communism. Surely, authors like Richard

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[22] Michal Buchowski, The Specter of Orientalism in Europe, From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), pp. 463-482, Don Kalb and Gábor Halmai, *Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class : Working-Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe*, Easa Series (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

Seymour wrote extensively about the American anti-communism of the 1950s and about the anti-communism of the French "New Philosophers" after the 1970s.[23] But by and large, the specific phenomenon of post-communist anti-communism remained in the shadow of other topics of research.

This was even more surprising since, seen through the lens of my Romanian case, anti-communism was not only strong and prominent but was also actively mobilizing various social forces. This was the case in 2006 when the presidential commission, mandated to elaborate a condemnation report of communism, made public its conclusions. The regime was considered "illegitimate and criminal", a conclusion officially embraced by the Romanian President in front of the Parliament. This, of course, stirred deep societal emotions, both from the supporters of the condemnation process, who believed that at least symbolically justice had been made, and from its critics who saw this only as political machination. I explore this episode and its implications at length in Chapter 2.

The condemnation of communism prior to the EU accession was a symbolic gesture of breaking with the past and starting a blank new page of history. Therefore, in a sense, it was a circumstantial moment. But anti-communism was not. In fact, anti-communism has been the hegemonic ideology of Romanian transition, a tool through which local neoliberal elites linked their interests with those of the global capital and of the transnational elites. As such, it was a mechanism for connecting with the interests of the Empire [24], and, in turn, helped to localize and indigenize its geostrategic and financial interests in the former communist context. Put differently, anti-communism is inseparable from global dynamics and instrumental for legitimizing the accumulation by dispossession in the former communist peripheries of the global system.[25]

I believe that one of the shortcomings of the literature dealing with the neoliberalization of Eastern Europe is that it constructed a binary view that opposed the forceful imposition of the structural adjustment measures to the resistance of the former communist people. [26] This model obliterated more transversal forms of alliances as well as local past legacies that were mobilized in the present to alter it and offer justifications for this alteration. Anti-communism was one such powerful local resource with roots before 1989 that offered important ideological and discursive resources to the local elites of the transition to pursue their class interests.

So this was my starting point: to try to give an account of post-communist Romanian anti-communism, as a particular angle through which to understand deeper phenomena of the post-communist transition more generally. I explicitly set out on this path after reading Katherine Verdery's *National Ideology under Socialism.*[27] In

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[23] Richard Seymour, *The Liberal Defence of Murder* (London: Verso Books, 2008).

[24] I use the term in the sense used here: József Böröcz, *The European Union and Global Social Change : A Critical Geopolitical-Economic Analysis*, Routledge Advances in European Politics (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2010).

[25] Kalb and Halmai.

[26] Elizabeth Dunn (2005), "Standards and Person-Making in East Central Europe." In *Global Assemblages*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, pp. 173-193

[27] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*, Societies and Culture in East-Central Europe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

the last part of her book, Verdery analyzed the phenomena of cultural resistance to the official Romanian culture of late 1980s by a group of philosophers grouped around the figure of Constantin Noica. This was the School of Păltiniş, so familiar to any Romanian intellectual since its members became the dominant figures of the transition period and the main proponents of anti-communism. Most of the people figuring in Verdery's book stood by the Romanian president during his condemnation speech.

In the twenty years that passed between Verdery's research and mine, this group of people moved from the relative margins of cultural creation under communism to the heart of political power. Their brand of anti-communism and perspective in relation to the communist past were not only dominant but also became official through the condemnation report. I wanted to understand this change, and in the process, to learn something about the writing of history of the communist past within and against established canons of historiographical knowledge. After all, the people most involved in writing the history of the communist past –or in passing a judgment about it – were not necessarily historians, for reasons I discuss in Chapter 2, but anti-communist intellectuals and former dissidents. In any case, their accounts were widely popular and well read.

Here we encounter another paradox of the transition literature. A series of studies have amply documented the role of the dissident and anti-communist intellectuals in opposing and bringing the communist regimes down.[28] To a large extent, the focus was disproportionate, leading to the obliteration of other important categories, such as workers.[29] After 1989 the interest in their trajectories waned and they disappeared from focus. This missed precisely the avatars of Eastern European post-communist anti-communism as a dominant paradigm for approaching the past: not understanding but condemnation. Most of the former dissidents and anti-communist intellectuals not only prolonged their anti-communism in order to publicly endorse neoliberal measures, but more importantly perhaps, many of them put forward conservative and anti-modern politics.

As Freud pointed out already, condemnation is the substitute for denial. In this case, it was the denial of communism's deep roots in western modernity. History writing functioned as a mechanism for forgetting, for erasing the past in the exact moment of its seeming investigation. In this process, the political struggles surrounding the archives and the uses of memory are salient but they too function as a cover-up, as a cultural *oublie*: that is, the effacement of class politics –the Real of capitalist modernity. But instead of seeing this as an epiphenomenon of the Eastern European transition, I argue that it indicates a wider mutation in the contemporary world more generally: the (re)-emergence of caste politics in which structural social antagonisms are codified as cultural and status differences on the background of sweeping

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[28] A good overview of this vast literature in Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens, The Sociology of Intellectuals, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2002, 28:63-90.
[29] For a different perspective, see, Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity : Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). Kalb and Halmai. Kalb, "Worthless Poles" and other Dispossessions.

processes of accumulation by dispossession.[30] Class in this context becomes then both a memento of the past but also the very possibility for imagining future emancipatory politics.

After 1989, the developmentalist logic of the defunct Party-State was replaced with a self-colonial aspiration of rejoining the west in which NATO and EU membership were a minimum requirement. As such, the communist past became a stumbling block that had to be excised and exorcized. Exposing the horrors of the past and the historic guilt of the perpetrators became necessary not only as a process of healing the wounds of the nation, but also as a pedagogical lesson for the future. While some parts of the past had to be highlighted and over-represented in order to serve the present day predicaments, others had to be bogged down or simply silenced.

My research deals with this centrality of the past in the present. More specifically, I am interested to inquire how various contrasting and competing notions of the communist past shape the making and breaking of post-communist histories, memories and amnesias by specifically located groups of people strained between a detestable past, a tumultuous present and an uncertain future. Consequently, I show how the past and, more specifically the definition of *what counts as past*, are constituted through ongoing political and ideological struggles for meaning, value and representation.

By examining the articulation of anti-communism in the field of history writing about the communist past I seek to take seriously the level of actual production of historiography. Or, as Brian Axel wrote, "*what is at stake in historical anthropology is explaining the production of a people, and the production of space and time*".[31] Consequently, instead of just highlighting the intellectual status of the former dissidents and anti-communist figures, I show how unequal access to the creation of epistemic forms happens in practice. To put it differently, my main interest is to analyze the field of writing the history of the communist past not as some sort of Bourdieusian field of symbolic struggles between intellectuals, but as very concrete attempts of producing knowledge, memories and embodied emotions about the past, and subsequently legitimizing and institutionalizing them.

In post-communist Romania, this process was hegemonized by an alliance of former dissident intellectuals and conservative thinkers, financially and institutionally backed by neoliberal politicians with a communist technocratic background. Against the economic and political interests of the former second echelon Communist Party apparatchiks, now turned local capitalists, anti-communism became a powerful political tool for electoral purposes but also, and perhaps more importantly, the main explanatory framework of the communist past. It remained largely uncontested, except for some marginal criticisms, and therefore dominant for almost two decades after 1989.

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[30] A possibility already announced by Verdery in her last chapter of Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* See also Don Kalb, "   from Flows to Violence : Politics and Knowledge in the Debates on Globalization and Empire," *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 2 (2005). Jonathan Friedman, *Globalization, the State, and Violence* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003).

[31] Brian Keith Axel, Introduction: Historical Anthropology and Its Vicissitudes. In Brian Keith Axel (editor). *From the Margins. Historical Anthropology and its Futures*. Duke University Press. 2002.

In 2008, however, Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Șiulea and Ovidiu Țichindeleanu edited a collective book entitled *Iluzia anticomunismului* [Illusion of Anticommunism].[32] Its authors were a mix of young writers and more established critical liberal anti-communist voices. Framed as a series of critical readings of the condemnation report, these texts challenged in fact the hegemony of anti-communism and its main political and ideological presuppositions. Later, this network crystalized as the CriticAtac collective: a more committed leftist initiative vigorously seeking to open up the public space to critical alternative voices and perspectives, outside and against the anti-communist and neoconservative hegemonic consensus. Struggles that first emerged within the field of communist historiography offered in the long run the possibility for rearticulating emancipatory and even anti-capitalist dispositions based on shared generational biographical experiences and class memories of the communist past.

After I read *Iluzia anti-communismului* the focus of my research changed again. I realized that a research solely of the anti-communist intellectuals and their history writing was unwarranted. *Iluzia* managed to effect a crack in the anti-communist edifice and far from being simply a matter of consent and domination,[33] it appeared as a field of struggle.[34] I became now interested in this struggle and its underlining forces and significances.

But the more I spent time with my new friends during my fieldwork, the more I understood that their working against the closure of the past and politics unfolds amidst their own more dramatic and urgent everyday toiling for making a living in the highly volatile economic context of the transition. Either fresh graduates or early professionals, they all struggled to find their way through the challenges of Romanian society of the late 1990s and the 2000s.

This everyday struggle for making a living under conditions of high uncertainty and limited scope for future plans gave a new directionality to the investigation of the past. While for the anti-communist intellectuals and former dissidents the investigation of the past was a source of symbolic power but also of very concrete material gains which extended their (upper) middle class status, for my critical intellectual friends it became a tool to make sense and fight against their economic and political marginalization. In chapters 5 and 6 I discuss these issues at length by showing how the nature of their engagement with anti-communism emerged from and in turn shaped a particular political orientation around the concept of labor and its attendant processes.

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[32] Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Siulea and Ovidiu Tichindeleanu (eds.), *Iluzia Anti-communismului. Lecturi Critice ale Raportului Tismaneanu*. Cartier, 2009. Since I will refer to this book several times in this dissertation, and not simply as a reference, I will hereafter simplify matters by calling it *Iluzia*.

[33] I refer here critically to the work of James C. Scott and his interpretations of power and resistance, public and hidden transcripts. See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance : Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[34] In contrast, as mentioned already, in order to capture the dynamics and struggles structuring my field of investigation, I invoke a different theoretical tradition, a Gramscian one. See Joseph and Nugent. Smith. Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.*

Far from being the standard academic indulgence into the pleasures of research, in their case the entire endeavor was both existential and polemical. Struggles for making a living and struggles for gaining meaning were forged together. This in turn elicited my interest into biographical details and longer pathways of formation so that I started to explore this aspect more, in increasingly informal and friendly interactions. From post-communist concerns and realities I was now moving back in time to my friends' pre-1989 youth and family trajectories, and then back to contemporary realities and strategies for intellectual and political crystallization.

At this stage of my research two things happened. First, I abandoned the category of "intellectual" as a useful tool and focused on class instead. I realized how the notion of intellectual in fact fetishizes a particular class position and a privileged relationship to production while offering little in terms of clear explanations. If anything, the category of the intellectual itself appeared as an effect of class struggle rather than a tool of grasping it.

I agree with Dominic Boyer that instead of a substantive, self-serving definition of the intellectual one should focus instead on processes of epistemic creation, of knowledge forms that are mobilized in order to understand and explain the world.[35] This allowed Boyer to offer a different framing to the historical experiences of his informants, a group of ex-GDR journalists, just as it enabled me to grasp the struggles on the terrain of historiography about the communist past not as simple intellectual games, but as very concrete struggles for meaning and for the capacity to give political expression to shared meanings and experiences.

A second important effect was that the focus on class and class dynamics pushed me to reconsider the notion of "transition" itself, especially the underpinning idea of a system collapsing in 1989 in order to give way to another one. The biographies of my informants, just like the biographies of the anti-communist intellectuals across the 1989 divide, hinted to continuities and longue duree processes rather than neat breaks and bounded periods. Therefore, in fact, I had to reconsider the entire communist experience as such.

Class, Transition and Communism

This dissertation is then also about recapturing a sense of class in a historical perspective, by linking wider class processes (already rooted in highly structural processes of production and accumulation) with particularly and locally circumscribed biographies. Consequently, I employ class as an analytic category highlighting concrete, particular and antagonistic interests of groups of people as they struggle to reproduce themselves in the face of uncertain futures.[36] But was not class dismissed due to its alleged inherent economic determinism, teleological underpinnings and ideological rigidity, so much so in post-communist contexts where class was regarded as an old ghost of the past? So, why revive a specter?

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[35] Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System : Media, Intellectuals, and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[36] Kalb, "   from Flows to Violence : Politics and Knowledge in the Debates on Globalization and Empire; Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950*. Don Kalb, ""Worthless Poles" and Other Dispossessions: Toward an Anthropology of Labor in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe," in *Anthropology of Labor*, ed. Carbonella and Kasmir(forthcoming). Don Kalb, Class and the New Anthropological Holism.

Against a determinist connection between labor and conscience, an "expanded" notion of class [37] denotes people's efforts to make the best of their contingent situations and also points to the struggles inherent to coping with and shaping the conditions not of their own choosing.[38] Furthermore, class presupposes that people's interests are construed dependent on their position in relation to the means necessary to secure livelihoods. Securing a living, in turn, generates a series of complex patterns of social relations. An expanded view of class is sensitive to the whole field of force that emerges when groups of people, differently positioned in relations to labor and capital (understood in broad terms) intersect and interact.

In this way, societal cleavages and struggles cease to be tied up crudely with matters of capital possession, but are expanded to a larger view on the axis of power vs. powerlessness, the content of which is not pre-determined, but contextually formed.[39] Class struggle ceases then to be about two reified entities. Marx's empirical question if a class-in-formation can organize and represent itself and make demands on the system that arrays it in hostile contrast to it, gains acute meaning. Consequently, maybe what is at stake to grasp is not only class struggles, but also struggles over class formation; struggles to define and "hegemonize" a particular field of force.[40] So, elements of class-in-formation are traceable when emergent social formations formulate certain demands and critical interpellations, and engendering alternative social or cultural relations.[41]

But since struggles for class formation, and their history, come into the spotlight, so do issues related to hegemony and domination. If class making is a political project of subjectivization and articulation of collective interests, hegemony ceases to be tied up with static and essential notions, such as superstructure. On the contrary, the hegemonic culture is hegemonic precisely insofar as it is a relational process. As E.P. Thompson[42], Eric Wolf[43] and Michel Foucault[44] showed in different manners, power is internal to people's relations and not tied exclusively to institutions. Hence, the notion of hegemony couples with class and power to designate a complex field of force, both material and ideological, that structure in a processual and dynamic manner social relations and formations, opportunities and life trajectories. Furthermore, the ability of the ruling groups to impose their domination depends to a large degree on whether a group or an alliance of different social groups emerges to oppose them. Consequently, the ruling class is a bloc, but in the Gramscian sense:

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[37] Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.*

[38] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow,: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1948).

[39] Stanley Aronowitz, *How Class Works : Power and Social Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.*

[40] Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.*

[41] Kalb, Class and the New Anthropological Holism.

[42] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New ed., Pelican Books, A1000 (Harmondsworth,: Penguin, 1968).

[43] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[44] Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

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always constituted by struggles and formation of alliances. From this angle, social integration and incorporation becomes a matter of struggle and disintegration of previous relations.

This reloaded version of class faces not only traditional external opponents (from post-structuralists to feminists), but also more insidious, internal enemies. The fall of communism rendered this opposition more visible. While on the one hand, class signified the dangerous remnant of the old world and reference to it meant speaking "the language of the enemy", on the other hand, transition entailed the widening of the gap between previously existing classes as well as the formation of new ones. The embodiment of this paradox is "middle class": class without class struggle, transition and class formation without antagonism, capitalism without domination and disempowerment.[45] Furthermore, the end of transition was equated with the formation of a strong middle class, capable of sustaining the economic changes via private property, small businesses, dynamic, well educated working force, but also technocratic and bureaucratic, able to respond to the new needs of the administration. The paradox to be fully grasped here is that in post-communist societies "middle class" played the role of a genuine Marxist historical, teleological agent (connecting pre-socialist times with emergent capitalist ones etc.), while references to class and Marx were obliterated or negatively mentioned.

In order to really save the concept of class from banality and to regain a more complex dimension of post-communist transformations, what becomes theoretically and empirically urgent is to open up the concept of "middle class" by breaking the apparent consensus it harbors, in favor of a view sensible to the struggles and inequalities it hides. This brings us full circle back to Marx who conceived of class struggles as the salient principle of any society, its innermost mechanism. Every social phenomenon and every social actor has a particular (shifting) position within the struggle. The view of a middle class outside such a struggle, or capable to absorb social antagonisms, is utopian insofar there is no neutral, external point outside class struggle. The social field of force is always already fractured along multiple and overlapping division lines. The very idea of social "peace" upon which the necessity of a strong middle class is premised, rather than dismissing the notion of struggle, highly re-emphasize it: "middle class's" social peace is an effect of that struggle – a class that (temporarily) "hegemonized" the social space.

At the same time the "middle class" functioned only as an ideological aspiration of the technical and intellectual intelligentsia emerging out of communism and leading the transition process. It was the dream of this class of becoming bourgeois and capitalists. In practice, the realities of the global capitalist hierarchies and competition for accumulation in fact subverted the very possibility for the middle class to emerge.[46] This, of course, was a global phenomena, subsumed to neoliberalism: in the past 40 years the middle class has been actively shrinking while the gulf between a

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[45] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject : The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Wo Es War (London ; New York: Verso, 1999). Don Kalb, The 'Empty Sign' of 'the Middle Class': Class and the Urban Commons in the 21st century, forthcoming.

[46] Don Kalb, The 'Empty Sign' of 'the Middle Class': Class and the Urban Commons in the 21st century, forthcoming.

tiny minority of rich people and the mass of precarized and unemployed laborers is ever growing.[47]

But this focus on an expanded notion of class necessarily brings into question the very nature of the "transition" period. To what extent this was really a transition to capitalism?

Many observers considered 1989 to be a watershed moment signaling the beginning of a transition period from communism to something else: usually to capitalism, market economy, civil society, democracy, and so on. Some have praised this shift as a necessary trajectory for the countries of the Eastern Bloc. They even called for a faster pace. The sooner the countries of the Eastern block left behind the nefarious legacy of state socialism –preferably through shock therapies and structural adjustments- the better. When this was not happening and all sorts of stumbling blocks came into the way of quick integration and immediate resolution of grand societal changes, the former communist apparatchiks and secret police officers were usually the first to be blamed. It was believed that their privileged position within the system offered them the leverages to benefit from the transition period as insiders and rent seekers and thus slow it down for their own gain.[48]

This diagnostic called for more transition, anti-corruption programs and civil society implication through the NGOs. The so-called "communist mentality", supposedly shaping the mind and character of the Soviet New Man, was believed to prevent people of Eastern Europe to properly understand the new realities and actively embrace them and take part in their full actualization. In short, Eastern Europeans resembled some infants that desperately needed mature guidance in the absence of their Father Figure(s) of the communist times[49], otherwise risking to fall into general anarchy and overall fight for resources. This diagnosis also called for adjustment programs.

The proponents of this "transitology" paradigm were indeed a mixed bunch : international organizations, western politicians, donors, political scientists and economists, NGOs and academics, journalists and adventurous entrepreneurs of all stripes, local technical and humanist intelligentsia. They shared common presuppositions: a teleological view of transition leading firmly away from the ruins of communism to the heights of capitalism and democracy western style; a complete disregard for the actual local realities in which they were operating; a profound civilizing and pedagogical undertone to their actions and interpretations; a complete misunderstanding of the previous regime and an outright, barely concealed, ignorance regarding the region.

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[47] Harvey. Op. cit. For precariat see Guy Standing, *The Precariat : The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011). Don Kalb, "Worthless Poles" and other Dispossessions, forthcoming.

[48] Former workers were also accused of slowing down the transition and because they sided with the former apparatchicks and secret police officers, especially in the context of Vadim Tudor's electoral success during the 2000 elections.

[49] John Borneman, *Death of the Father : An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

But more importantly perhaps, what united them was a regained sense of optimism regarding the power of capitalism and western democracy. While in the West this sentiment was lost in 1968 and only partially revived during the conservative 1980s, it was possible to project it and rediscover it in the East after 1989.[50] There, it seemed, the virtues of capitalism and democracy –the two interconnected pillars of western modernity as imagined by liberalism- would find new strengths capable to restart democracy worldwide. Consequently, post-communist Central and Eastern Europe quickly became the "New Europe", with all the virtues and weaknesses of a newborn. This belief was invited also by the experience of the anti-communist dissidents prior to 1989 and their public roles after the fall. By basing their opposition to the crumbling communist states in the values of textbook western democracy, this tradition gathered a new symbolic importance.

Surely, the realities of actually existing post-communism quickly flew in the face of these heightened expectations and idealistic constructions. But then the proponents of transitology blamed the people, not their own ideological presuppositions. From cherished revolutionaries bravely bringing dictatorships down, people of Eastern Europe soon become the epitome of backwardness and sluggishness.[51]

At precisely this point entered the criticism of this transitology paradigm. The gap between state and everyday life, institutions and people, ideologies and practices, imagined futures and concrete pasts was recognized as such and instead of being brushed aside was openly confronted. Since both theoretically and methodologically it was best suited for this task, most of this criticism took place in the house of anthropology spurred by western scholars with previous solid fieldwork experience in Eastern Europe. Their underlining presuppositions were naturally different than those in the transitology paradigm: a refusal of simplistic teleology, a detailed knowledge of the ground, a keen eye for practices, a rejection of deterministic models of path-dependency.[52]

This different scholarly focus reflected in fact different ideological affiliations and intellectual allegiances: a commitment to left liberalism if not a prolonged one to socialism and communism. For many scholars exploring the particularities of Eastern European communism, their collapse and trajectories was part of a larger endeavor to continue to think through worldwide viable alternatives to capitalism.

This field of inquiry was substantial and prolific, offering a view from below of the transition process and, more importantly, a staunch criticism of its presuppositions and effects on the lives of people. Approaching central issues such as privatization[53], market transformations[54], de-collectivization[55], de-industrialization[56], effacing of the

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[50] Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, Wo Es War (London ; New York: Verso, 2001).

[51] A point well made by Boris Buden, *Zonă De Trecere* (Cluj: Tact, 2012).

[52] Characteristic collections on this point are Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, *Uncertain Transition : Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* C. M. Hann, *Postsocialism : Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).

[53] Katherine Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare : Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Culture & Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[54] Caroline Humphrey (2000), "How Is Barter Done? The Social Relations of Barter in Provincial Russia. " In *The Vanishing Rouble*, ed. Paul Seabright.

[55] Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare : Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*.

former working class[57], mass-migration[58], urban change[59], gender relations[60], cultural transformations[61] and everyday life practices[62], but also the globalization of Eastern Europe[63], this paradigm managed to offer an in-depth, thoroughly circumscribed and ethnographically informed account of post-1989 transformations and their necessary links with the past and foreseeable directions for the future.

These studies truly historicized and politicized the work of the experts and politicians in the region and brought back in not so much "the people", but the junction between people and institutions, structures and contingent trajectories, macro-transformations and micro-changes, in a variety of scholarly tradition and with various theoretical tools, ranging from Marxist analyses of class[64], to Bourdieusian analyses of status[65], to network analysis[66], and to group biographies.[67] In the 2000s, this paradigm was used as a starting point for scholars of the region interested in wider transformations, such as the neoliberal governmentality and its attendant process of subject formation and identity[68], religious sensibilities and communities[69], western aid[70], consumption practices[71] and so on.

Its strengths notwithstanding this body of literature nonetheless got trapped into the same dangers faced by those proposing the transitology paradigm: it magnified the importance of 1989 as a watershed moment and subsequently placed a large emphasis on the "unmaking of soviet life". It seemed that the basic presupposition of the transitologists remained intact: history did end in 1989 for these countries, but not with a bang as the transitologists suggested, but more protracted and more complex

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[56] Ost.

[57] Don Kalb, Conversations with a Polish Populist, *American ethnologist*, 2009, vol. 36.

[58] Jessica Allina-Pisano (2009), "From Iron Curtain to Golden Curtain: Remaking Identity in the European Union Borderlands.**" *East European Politics and Societies* 23 (2): 266-290.

[59] Gregory D. Andrusz, Michael Harloe, and Iván Szelényi, *Cities after Socialism : Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies* (Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1996).

[60] Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000), *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*

[61] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More : The Last Soviet Generation*, In-Formation Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[62] Daphne Berdahl, Matti Bunzl, and Martha Lampland, *Altering States : Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[63] Sharad Chari, Katherine Verdery, Thinking between the posts, Comparative Studies in Society and History 2009;51(1):6–34,

[64] Michael Burawoy, *Global Ethnography : Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[65] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*.

[66] David Stark and Laszlo Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways : Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[67] Dahpne Berdhal, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1999.

[68] Elizabeth C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland : Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[69] Mathijs Pelkmans, *Conversion after Socialism : Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

[70] Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*

[71] Daphne Berdahl (2005), "The Spirit of Capitalism and the Boundaries of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47: 235-251

than they could imagine. The task then became that of charting the more subtle aspects of the end of the communist world.

Moreover, by posing this view of the transition from one world to another, inevitably the worlds became reified and reduced to their basic features. In order to trace the changes from communism, this historical period and historical formation seemed to have lost its very historicity and previous internal dynamics. To put it in more concrete terms, marketization, privatization, the effacing of working class power and Mafia –to name just a few famously researched phenomena – were really triggered by the 1989 events, or, in effect, they were already fundamental characteristics of the communists states as well, just as they are to any capitalist state worldwide? Let me point to some examples that, in my view, reify the distinction between communism and capitalism and which offer a sui generis explanation of the post-1989 transformations.

In her *Privatizing Poland*, Elisabeth Dunn argued against the idea put forward by Michael Burawoy that capitalism and socialism are comparable given the general disenfranchisement of workers on the shop floor. On the contrary, Dunn argues, there was a big difference between the capitalist enterprise and the socialist one: the Plan. In capitalism, the Plan is private and is established at the level of owners and management. In communism, the Plan was established by party bureaucrats and at the nation-state level for the entire economy, not for the enterprise itself and in keeping with its specificities.

Furthermore, the communist enterprise functioned outside market relations, within soft budgetary constraints (compared to the capitalist ones) which in turn impacted on the work rate, work conditions, timing, pressures and so on imposed on workers. In conclusion, Dunn believes that even though the two systems might share a modern common root, at the practical level they are utterly different, capitalism and communism being "two different modernities"[72] which produced different types of workers and different labor relations.

From here on, Dunn can go back to post-communism and depict how the former workers are forced into new forms of labor and subjectivity following the post-communist neoliberal privatizations. Is not this a form of essentializing communism as distinct from western modern capitalism simply by relying not on a narrow definition of communism, but on a textbook understanding of capitalism? Why is it really the case that what defines the existence or absence of capitalism is the market[73] or the Plan, and not the regime of property, the mode of production or the class character these relations engender? Seen from the perspective of the means of production is it still possible to really talk of huge differences between communism and capitalism? On the contrary, if we define (industrial) capitalism as a mode of

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[72] Dunn, Privatizing Poland, pp. 18

[73] Surely, the insistence on the centrality of market mechanisms as defining the western modernity implicitly relies on a Weberian presupposition. But already Weber's construction of the west's characteristics relied on essentialist and colonialist constructions of what the non-west was, see especially Max Weber and Stephen Kalberg, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). If Weber was doing these essentialist constructions from a western perspective, after 1989 the essentialist constructions seem to be made from an eastern one, identifying the non-western salient features of the communist and post-communist east.

production and accumulation based on waged labor employed for the creation of mass industrial commodities then it appears clear that the economic and social base of communism and capitalism was identical. Thus, what appears to be an essential difference between the two regimes warranting talks of multiple modernities is in fact a simple difference in terms of political forms of organizing production and accumulation.

Along the similar lines of trying to identify the defining features of the people emerging from communism, Carolyn Humphrey made an even sharper point.[74] For her, concepts such as the market, trading, global capitalistic economy are all rooted in western and largely American experiences and traditions and as such they cannot be properly understood by other people in other contexts, especially in such a context as Eastern Europe from where capitalism was absent since 1945. Consequently, when transplanted outside of their initial context, these concepts seem not to travel well and engender instead quite unexpected outcomes, as Humphrey documents in her case studies.

Such constructions mobilize in fact a view of a moral economy of the communist person that is being altered by the new capitalistic realities.[75] In effect, such a view is not dissimilar to that of the anti-communist scholars who maintain that the imposition of communism in 1945 in Eastern Europe affected the moral fabric of the respective societies and upset their "natural" rhythms. Moreover, such dichotomy, rooted in perceived cultural particularisms and localisms, also dangerously hinge on an unspoken western cultural superiority and on racism and colonialism. Here too, the East seems to be lacking some basic features to be properly western, relying instead on a particular mind frame that requires adaptation and domestication. For Humphrey, but for many others in the same vein, privatization as envisaged by the transitologists was not feasible because it neglected these cultural understandings of the people and their moral economy. The only conclusion that can be drawn from here is that privatization that is culturally and morally sensitive is preferable.

The real question that needs to be asked here is to what extent the precise socio-economic and political forms in which capitalism emerged in the west must, by necessity, take the same forms elsewhere in order to be recognized as such? By obliterating this question, I believe, most of the analyses of communism failed to recognize the universal and global character of the capitalist social totality and also its different articulations in various locales and circumstances throughout the twentieth century, including the case of Eastern European communism.

Instead, authors in this vein preferred to introduce the concept of "domestication", closely linked with a view of society structured along the lines of "power and resistance", and "structure and agency", the classic dualism of western social sciences. For example, in the aforementioned *Privatizing Poland*, Dunn's main point is that after the privatization of the Polish factory she studied, despite the best efforts of the new American owners to train their Polish employees into the flexible work relations of the post-fordist, neoliberal economy, in the end the Polish workers

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[74] Caroline Humphrey, *The Unmaking of Soviet Life : Everyday Economies after Socialism / Caroline Humphrey*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
[75] See also Mandel and Humphrey.

emerge victorious. They managed to domesticate neoliberalism based on previous, communist skills. A similar argument is developed in the work of Gerald Creed who points to the domestication of revolution and transition in a Bulgarian village.[76]

Culture is back in town with vengeance. This is clearly evident in the dynamics of the studies of post-communism. In the 1990s and early 2000s the main focus was on grasping social and political transformations from below, especially the impact of the "transition" on peoples' lives. By contrast, the next decade brought a clear culturalization of the field: not class struggle, but nostalgia[77], not labor issues but memory practices[78], not everyday strategies for making a living but (neoliberal) subjectivities[79], not issues of production, but rituals of consumption and taste.[80]

This return to culture is wider than the particular area studies of post-communism and Eastern Europe because of the culturalization of the communist legacy itself. As Boris Buden has noted, during the post-communist transition, the political character of communism (as an explicit *political* alternative to western capitalism) has been neutralized and domesticated.[81] From a sharp political antagonism, communism became a cultural difference, attributed to the Easterners and experienced by them as stigma and trauma. The communist past became a sign of cultural inferiority in relation to the West and the reason for the on-going calls to "catch-up" and "civilize" that are so specific to the transition.

This double process of culturalization and depoliticization of communism in post-communism relies on a subtle mixture of historical amnesia and cultural memory. In fact, the latter is the substitute for the former: the historical examination of the radical political nature of the communist project is replaced by its cultural memory. In this context, the role of anti-communism has been that of effecting this substitution, which renders it a principal tool in the cultural industry of post-communism.

Consequently, at this point, it becomes necessary to rethink communism specifically in relation to the global capitalist modernity and its dynamics.[82] This is also important because the interpretative frameworks of neoliberalism and post-industrialism that attempted to come to terms with the global changes in production and accumulation

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[76] Gerald W. Creed, *Domesticating Revolution : From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). See also Gerald W. Creed, *Masquerade and Postsocialism : Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*, New Anthropologies of Europe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

[77] I discuss a series of texts on nostalgia in Chapter 3, but see Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

[78] Rausing, Sigrid. 2004. *History, Memory, and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia: The End of Collective Farm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[79] Shevchenko, Olga. 2009. *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana.

[80] Neringa Klumbytė (2010), "The Soviet Sausage Renaissance." *American Anthropologist* 112 (1): 22-37.

[81] Buden, op. cit.

[82] I am fully aware that there is a huge literature dealing with the "western modernity" emerging from different strands of thought and academic traditions. I am also aware that even the relationship between modernity and capitalism is itself problematic, some contesting it as pleonastic, others pointing to its centrality in espousing mechanisms of colonialisms and empire with a deeper reach that a focus on capitalism can suggest. However, I will not be able to address these discussions in relation to the Soviet modernity in this dissertation.

after 1968, but especially in connection to 1989 transformations, are of limited use if they are not supplemented from above by a global perspective on the capitalist modernity and from below, by a specific focus on class politics and its historical trajectories.

I will develop these points at length in Chapter 1. But for now suffice it to note that the communist regimes were political formations centrally and hierarchically organized in order to thoroughly transform backward and underdeveloped societies along the lines set by the modern industrial west.[83] But unlike in the west where profit at the expense of the workers was within the logic of the system, these regimes drew their legitimacy and revolutionary claims from an explicit commitment to revert this relationship in favor of the laboring classes. In practice, all communist states emphasized the general rapid development of the society with workers at the helm, rather than stressing anti-capitalist sentiments, especially after the early defeat of the global proletarian revolution envisaged by Lenin's Bolsheviks. Stalin's much maligned formula of "socialism in one country" was basically the affirmation of this developmentalist logic *within* the confines of the capitalist world-system.

The political mechanism to achieve this goal was the Party-State, a specific invention modeled on Bismarck's Prussian bureaucracy but tailored to respond to the particular conditions of post-Tsarist Russia.[84] Already theorized by Lenin as the vanguard of the proletariat on the way to state and economic power, the Party-State was brought to perfection by Stalin, when indeed the Bolshevik Party and the institutions of the state fused together under his strict control. This bureaucratic structure enabled the centralization of the means and relations of production, indispensable for a Blitzkrieg against backwardness. Its effectiveness in the Stalinist years is now beyond dispute and suffices it to note the productivity of the Soviet economy before and during WWII.[85] The inbuilt inertias, contradictions and aporias of this mechanism led in the long run to all sorts of economic and social problems and finally to its official demise in 1989, orchestrated, in earnest, by its apparatchiks.[86]

But before that, following the victory in the "Great Patriotic War" this political mechanism was first exported to Eastern Europe and then, during the Cold War to other parts of the Global South entering the Soviet orbit. After initial moments of success in most places, the rigidity of this structure soon outweighed its advantages and led to stagnation, a fact compounded by various shifting processes in the global system. What seemed like a genuinely novel and powerful political assemblage at the beginning of the "short twentieth century", especially in the underdeveloped contexts of the semi-periphery, became completely outdated by the century's end. Forged as a monolithic structure in the heydays of mass industrialism and tested in the difficult times of "War Communism" and especially WWII, the Party-State mechanism looked completely out of place, both politically and economically, in the context of global financial capitalism becoming hegemonic from the late 1970s onwards.

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[83] Hobsbawm. Op cit.

[84] Janos.op cit.

[85] David Priestland, *The Red Flag : Communism and the Making of the Modern World* (London, England: Allen Lane, 2009).

[86] Stephen Kotkin and Jan Tomasz Gross, *Uncivil Society : 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment*, Modern Library ed., Modern Library Chronicles (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

On the other hand, the very internal processes set in motion by the Party-State ultimately forced its demise. By creating social differentiation and, most importantly, antagonistic classes, the Party-State created in fact its own gravediggers.[87] Or, to keep the Marxist terms, what brought it to its knees was the contradiction between the forces of production (technical white-collar intelligentsia) and the relations of production (especially central planning). In 1989, the political monopoly of the Party-State was questioned and ultimately broken by an alliance of, on the one hand, second and third echelon party apparatchiks by now completely immune to its ideological presuppositions, and on the other hand, the technical and humanist intelligentsia for which this political form represented an economic and political hindrance. The working class was mobilized in terms of sheer numbers but lacked any political clout to control the ensuing political arrangements.[88]

The communist trajectory followed the blueprints of capitalist industrial modernity, turning peasants into waged workers and in the process effectively realizing a shift away from traditional rural life to unprecedentedly complex urban systems. In this world-encompassing transformation, the entire coordinates of the world changed and everything that seemed solid in fact melted into the air of the new global society. The roots of it can be traced back to the 16th century but its actual manifestations and worldwide outreach became visible after the "double revolution"[89] at the end of the 18th century: that is, the industrial revolution in Britain subsequently magnified globally by the Empire and the French revolution with instant seismic effects around the world.[90] This historical sequence produced some very important concepts and institutions: most relevant for the discussion here being the notion of class, the concept of history and the tools for writing and archiving it, communism as a radical version of socialism and revolution, with its undergirding concepts of progress, development and total transformation.

This *longue duree* process seems exhausted today, at least in the northern hemisphere, and perhaps one has to take seriously Francois Furet's suggestion that 1989 marked the end of a world historical sequence opened up in 1789. At the opposite ideological spectrum, Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm seems to have taken this temporalization on board too, his famous tetralogy stretching between these two historical benchmarks. This corresponds to what authors in the world-system vein have described as the decline of the west's hegemony.[91]

Perhaps, then, Francis Fukuyama was not entirely off the mark when he suggested that the collapse of the former communist states in 1989 signified the "end of

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[87] György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

[88] Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*.Ost. Kalb and Halmai.

[89] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, London: Abacus, 1973.

[90] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York,: Vintage Books, 1963). Susan Buck-Morss, Susan Buck-Morss, and Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, Illuminations (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

[91] Arrighi; Jonathan Friedman and Christopher K. Chase-Dunn, *Hegemonic Decline : Present and Past*, 1st ed., Political Economy of World-System Annuals (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005). Don Kalb, *The Ends of Globalization : Bringing Society Back In* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

history".[92] Not in the sense of the future absence of social conflicts given the total hegemony of liberal capitalism, but precisely as the end of the laic, progressive, linear, future-oriented conception of history specific to western modernity. Seen from this perspective, especially in Eastern Europe, history did indeed seem to have ended in 1989 and irrevocably so. The hegemonic pessimism about the past and the future mentioned above meets the theoretical awareness of a structural mutation at the global level. This *fin de millenaire* perception of the end of history was poignantly anticipated already by the millenaristic and religious undertones of the 1989 events: the end of the communist world.[93]

Memory, Nostalgia and Archives

The struggle around anti-communism on the terrain of historiography took my investigation progressively into the past and opened it up to a global level. But, there is a present and local field of contention opened up by the anti-communist historiography, interlinked with the aspects discussed so far but nonetheless distinct. Specifically, I refer to the questions of memory, nostalgia and archives emerging within this horizon as fields of struggle and contention.

The distinction between History and Memory – itself quintessential for the modern encoding of historiography as a discipline – is in fact collapsed in the anti-communist discourse leading to a hybrid that I call *history-as-memory*: the official history written by the historians has the shape and structure of memory. This appears as an impenetrable construction, since it places a disproportionate emphasis on memories of trauma and sufferance of the former propertied classes. The structural gap between History and Memory is not overcome, but displaced: paradigmatic memories and particular traumatic experiences are elevated to the status of history as such, hence obliterating other histories, other memories, and other voices, especially of the working people. The centrality of class in this process is crucial.

My research diverges quite significantly from the current boom of memory studies, including in anthropology. I agree with David Berliner here that in the past two decades, memory has replaced "culture" as a new black box easily available for particularist and essentialist explanations.[94] Instead of subscribing to the current paradigm of trying to understand "how societies remember" or tracing the particularities of "collective memory" after communism –all, I need to add, the purview of anti-communist scholarship, at least in Romania – I am more interested to show how the very distinction between history and memory is actively mobilized by the anti-communist discourse for its own hegemonic purposes, an aspect I tackle in Chapter 2.

The conclusions of the Romanian presidential report for the condemnation communism called for the establishment of supporting institutions, most importantly a museum of communism, but also for high-school manuals, monuments and special

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[92] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York
Toronto: Free Press ;
Maxwell Macmillan Canada ;
Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992).
[93] Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe : The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).
[94] David Berliner, "The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology," *Anthropological Theory* 78, no. 1 (2005).

classes. The reason behind this recommendation was that the authors of the report identified as one of the main problems of the transition the "wrong" memory people have in relation to their own past. This had to be corrected through a vast pedagogy of memory implemented by the anti-communist elites. And here one can discern the full circularity of anti-communism: history written by anti-communist intellectuals based on their own personal experiences and memories had to be institutionalized and taught to people who in this way would acquire a "correct" memory of communism too. One central institution envisaged for bringing to fruition this process was the museum of communism that I discuss in chapter 3.

On this background, the repudiation of the communist nostalgia –inevitably attributed to the destitute working classes – was salient. Here, again, the western academic scholarship and local anti-communism seem to share a common point: they both take for granted the existence of such a phenomenon and then try to identify its substantive features. In Chapter 3, by contrast, I take a different view and show how the very concept of nostalgia is in fact the effect of class struggle during the transition period and instead of asking what are its salient features, I ask what are its political functions.

One such function is to obliterate on the one hand the ample nostalgic longing for the interwar period depicted by the anti-communist intellectuals as the Romanian golden age prior to communism, and on the other the nostalgia for the Cold War of the former dissidents. As for the former workers, forced to migrate in order to make a living following the privatizations of factories, they had less time to wax nostalgic: their preoccupations were firmly anchored in the present, and dramatically so. Their so-called nostalgia for communism, frequently invoked as a nefarious spectrum by liberal scaremongers, was simply longing for a time of security that was now lacking and for a sense of dignity that was now completely lost.

Concomitantly, memory and the process of writing the history of communism also elicit a very important site of historical knowledge production in western modernity: namely, the archive, which I approach in Chapter 4. In the post-communist case, the archive of the former Secret Police (the *Securitate* in Romania) has been inscribed as the repository of truth about the communist past. Therefore, it figures prominently in the writing of post-communist history, both as source of data for historical writings but also as a proof in a perpetual trial of communism, exposing perpetrators and supposedly bringing justice to their victims. Paradoxically, then, the files of the Securitate became cornerstone artifacts for the lustration attempts of post-communism and for the broader attempts at "transitional justice".

By linking the files of the secret police with the truth about one's past, the archive – which is by definition the archival power of the state – became indistinguishable from one's personal biographical trajectory. This is clearly discernable in the case of the anti-communist dissidents for whom their existence as surveillance targets in the archive of the Securitate offered them the very identity of dissidents. But on a more general, societal level, the archive also functioned as a biographical element: it told who is one's Neighbor, who lived a "correct", "uncompromised" life under communism and who, consequently, can make a claim towards shaping the post-communist present. Hence, the archive was invested with meaning and power to such

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an extent that it can actively instill new symbolic and moral hierarchies even after 1989.

Furthermore, the archive of the former Securitate was invoked as the trademark of the totalitarian nature of communism, frightening people into obeisance through total control and ubiquity of monitoring. This, in turn, justified anti-communism's fascination with their content. But instead of subscribing to this fetishization of secrecy I look at the secret police as the specific tool through which the Party-State was generating knowledge about society. From this angle, the Securitate archive appears less extraordinary and evil and in fact thoroughly connected to modern practices of legibility employed by the state. More specifically, this "archive fever" was inseparable from very concrete class struggles unfolding during and after communism, which significantly structure not only the competition for privileged access to its files after 1989 but also its very content: files became available for public consultation only at the end of highly entrenched political battles.

But as Vladimir Tismăneanu noted recently in a blog post, we witness in fact an archival turn in relation to the study of Eastern Europe, a new terrain of study. Surely, in the case of the GDR this possibility was present earlier, due to the particularities of opening the secret police archive after the unification. But in the rest of the former bloc the process is just emerging. Consequently, a series of important studies about or using materials from these archives have appeared.[95] But my perspective here is also different: instead of approaching these archives as sources of data and knowledge, I analyze them as forms of knowledge.[96] Consequently, my interest is not so much in their factual content, but in the way they reveal a particular modern form of legibility and knowledge. In so doing, I move again from the particularities of my field site to a global level in which the communist experience is thoroughly rooted in modern practices of knowledge, science and archival power.

II. Anthropology of Being in History

From a theoretical perspective this dissertation offers a new rapprochement between philosophy and anthropology by exploring the theoretical potential and epistemic implications of historically specific life trajectories. At a general level my main protagonist is then quite unusual: namely, history. I explore the imbrication of real historical processes and transformations shaping peoples' lives and their representation in historiographical productions, ideological presuppositions and popular culture. This, in turn, engenders a return to questions of time and temporality as well as to personal and embodied aspects of being simultaneously the subject and object of historical forces in the flow of time. I propose an anthropology *of* history as a theoretical appraisal of our necessary and structural immersion *in* time. I ask what does it mean to live in history, to be part of wide, structural, mostly opaque, abstract and intangible sweeping historical processes, as a particular human being immersed

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[95] Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics : The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism*, Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011); Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics : Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).
[96] See also, Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archives of Romania's Secret Police*. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

within locally circumscribed, but globally determined set of conditions and biographical events?

But as Herman Rebel pointed out, being –human existence - is inseparable from memory and biographical narratives and as such philosophical anthropology must take the form of a historical anthropology *"whose contribution is to offer scholarly-scientific critiques of such narratives"*.[97] This, in turn, leads to a historical redefinition of power in the tradition inaugurated by Eric Wolf which means in fact paying careful attention not only to the little power people have that enable them to resistance, but also to the structural *"power that has them, forcing on them disempowering social relations that yet require and favor ineffable exercises of power in families and even the self to the point of self-destructive violences and sacrifices in allegedly only privately experienced social and psychological spaces"*.[98] The aim is then to truly offer an account of power that is both structural and micro, foreclosing and empowering, at once disabling and enabling structurally patterned choices, options and life biographies.

What I propose is not the standard cultural phenomenology of time so specific to certain cultural trends in anthropology dealing with how various people and various cultures experience and define time.[99] In these analyses the presuppositions of cultural homogeneity and substantiveness are untenable. One has to confront the more daring task of inscribing historical becoming and transformations as objects of theoretical and ethnographic inquiry but premised upon and deeply rooted in concrete lived experiences. This opens the possibility for a real anthropology of the *world* in all its materiality, global nature, contradictory and discontinuous structure, and simultaneously of the status of living in it as a finite human being that navigates tentatively and often blindfolded between various shifting conditions and structural arrangements "not of one's own choosing" –to invoke Marx's apt formula.

But in so doing I do not want to pose again the old question of "agency" and "structure", let alone to offer a solution to it. Rather, I emphasize how this dichotomy, this tension between "spirit" and "system"[100], is historically embedded, and as such fundamentally shapes the limits of what is considered possible, doable, rewarding, pleasurable, etc. This immanent tension always brings to the fore more over-arching questions, especially that of the meaning of life and, more specifically, of the highly personal and social attempts to find one which I discuss in Chapter 6.

The question of the meaning of life is always posed with greater acuity in moments of great ruptures and transformation in people's lives. The 1989 moment in Eastern Europe was such a moment, when "everything that seemed forever, was no more".[101] This entailed a dramatic shift in the perceptions and understandings of the communist regimes that, in turn, generated highly emotional biographical reappraisals of the

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[97] Hermann Rebel, *When Women Held the Dragon's Tongue : And Other Essays in Historical Anthropology*, Dislocations (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010). pp. xii
[98] idem, pp. xv.
[99] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other : How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[100] Boyer, op cit.
[101] Yurchak, op cit.

past.[102] This raises a series of interconnected questions that an anthropology of being in time can investigate, such as: what is to live a good life in turbulent times and world-transforming transitional periods? What does it mean to act politically? How to capture such elusive feelings of optimism, enthusiasm, pessimism, Weltschmerz that are not simply personal, but generational? How are justifications about one's life decisions and actions are formulated, expressed and represented? How do feelings of resignation, disappointment, renunciation and despair take shape amid the course of one's life and how do they gather meaning and political relevance? The ontological level that depicts life as a transition through time is compounded by the level of transition through particular political and economic realities, with breaks and continuities.

Consequently, the alleged moment of maximal openness of 1989 basically operated an ontological closing in politics. This closure affected the political choices available and the ideological language in which to formulate them. Also, it enforced a hegemonic control by the Cold War winners over the communist past. Theirs was a dramatic story, with heroes and villains, crimes and oppression that nonetheless ended with a happy end. This Hollywoodian script informed many of the analyses of the communist past and further naturalized the discourse about "telling the truth" about the communist past which in turn, in many cases, simply made anti-communism and historical research indistinguishable.

It is perhaps time to tell a different truth, one that is at once rooted both in concrete biographical trajectories and abstract global historical processes. This, at least, is the aim of this dissertation.

III. Materials and the Organization of Chapters

My 18-month fieldwork in Romania consisted mainly of interactions with the network of friends that produced *Iluzia Anti-communismului*. After I read *Iluzia* and understood that it constituted a turning point in the local intellectual setting, I approached Costi Rogozanu, one of the editors, for a discussion and an interview. Through him I met the rest of the editors and close collaborators in a snowballing effect. My focus was now clearly set on understanding their struggles to make sense of the communist past –their own and their families'- as an intellectual confrontation with the hegemonic paradigm of anti-communism and with its regime of history writing, memory industry and regime archive described above.

Meanwhile, I continued my explorations by conducting interviews with Romanian sociologists and professors but also with some other prominent public figures of the transition. Concomitantly, I read the post-communist archives of some of the most important Romanian cultural weeklies, (*Dilema Veche* where I also did a three months participatory observation research, *Observator Cultural* and *Revista 22*) trying to grasp the main intellectual debates of the transition. Also, I read almost all texts written by my informants during post-communism in order to be able to trace their thinking through time. I tried to do the same with the texts of the most prominent

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[102] See the special section "Our 1989", In *Focaal*, Volume 2010, Number 58, Winter 2010,pp. 97-123(27). See also, Maruska Svasek, *Postsocialism : Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

former dissidents and anti-communist intellectuals, as well as with the major anti-communist productions in the spheres of history and memory. However, the sheer size of this body of literature in Romanian is by now so large that it is impossible for a single researcher to properly grasp it.

This, in turn, led me to a close investigation of the Romanian publishing industry, interviewing now editors, translators and authors and trying to understand how it works and how it exploits its workers. As part of this effort, I attended five major book fares, making more interviews, noting trends and observing interactions at book launchings.

According to the colonial parlance of anthropology I was a "native anthropologist", doing fieldwork at home. But what does it mean exactly to do ethnography at home, to be at home in anthropological research? Perhaps here we should take a different view on the meaning of familiarity: not necessarily doing ethnography among one's "native people" but precisely feeling familiar and confortable with anthropology's long standing and ingrained hierarchical relations.

One such tradition presupposes doing fieldwork among populations that at the end of it will *not* be able to read or make any kind of input into the final product of the researcher. Their role is strictly that of being "informers", without any possibility of having access to the entire research project as such. While supposedly the informants are given voice to express themselves in the pages of the ethnography, in fact they are structurally silenced and excluded from the academic jargon and rules for knowledge production and dissemination. For me, this is one way to see "anthropology at home" –that is, in the safe retreats of intellectual inexpugnability and unaccountability vis-à-vis one's informers.

From this perspective I was not at all at "home". My ethnography took place among intellectuals and writers who are smarter, better established and with a range of experiences and reputations incomparable to that of a graduate student, such as myself. To my luck and to their vast credit they did not let that show and instead welcomed me from the very beginning extremely warmly. But this, of course, did not dent in any way the sharpness of our long intellectual discussions, explorations and even disagreements of sorts.

Thus, they were never my "informants" but partners of dialogue from whom I learned a great deal, but who also did not shy away from criticizing my interpretations, question my academic positionality and challenge my assumptions. I did the same with theirs too, trying to avoid another commonplace assumption in anthropology, which says that informants know their lives and environment best and we just record what they have to say. My ideas and interpretations, my theories and understandings were forged and deconstructed, reinterpreted and revised during these long and spirited conversations. In the end, it was a thoroughly dialogical construction.

Ironically, my fieldwork in Romania coincided with yet another moment of transition: from the peak of the credit boom (which reached historic proportions in 2008) to its bust in 2009 and its severe effects in 2010. This economic downturn also coincided with the festive celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In a completely farcical atmosphere, the enthusiasm for the demise of

communism had to be affirmed despite the prevailing deep crisis of capitalism, leading many people into poverty, social insecurity and helplessness, hardly conceivable even during communism, despite its many failures. For example, Romanian state employees had to take a 25% cut of their salaries in order to reduce deficit, if they were lucky enough to hold on to that job and not get the ax. The 2009 moment became the real reversed mirror image of 1989: the highest point of despair, resignation, poverty and precariousness. The great expectations of 1989, its whole mirage, were finally and definitely crushed in 2009. Perfect time to do fieldwork!

The chapters are organized in a spiral. My investigation starts in Chapter 1 by offering a class history of Romania in the context of Eastern European modernity. But rather than subscribing to mainstream historiography that sees a break in 1945 and therefore considers communism as a sui generis category, I embed the communist experience in this modern dynamic, highlighting continuities, similarities and wider dynamics. There, I also make a case for communism as "state capitalism", something that will help me frame the rest of the research.

In Chapter 2 I analyze the formation of the Romanian presidential commission and the content of its report as a symptom of the wider forces shaping the anti-communist regimes of historiography and memory. Chapter 3 extends this discussion to include the role of the museum of communism in this constellation, and deconstructs the notion of nostalgia in post-communism by pointing both to its class character.

Chapter 4 is a long tour through the archive of the Securitate. It depicts how the files of this archive were integrated into historical writing after 1989 as sources of data while exploring their larger social functions. Then I discuss what it means to "read along the archival grain" in the case of the Securitate files, while offering an explanation of their status as instruments of knowledge during communism. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of the post-communist practice of reading one's secret police file and the subsequent attempt of giving an account of oneself following the revelations contained in these files.

The final two chapters will offer center stage to my intellectual friends. In chapter 5 I discuss at length their struggles to break the hegemony of anti-communist historiography as a way to open up political possibilities in the present. The chapter also discusses their daily interactions as a group but also throws light on more structural aspects, such as their intellectual formation and becoming across the 1989 divide.

In Chapter 6 I move back again to the global level by examining their structured biographies with a view to discussing changing structures of feelings which in turn bring to light political questions regarding labor, reproduction of and the meaning of life in articulation with questions of possibilities and futures. I explore how disenchantment becomes the necessary horizon of the transition period and how, despite its thoroughly pessimist undertones and de-mobilizing effects, it functions as a counterpoint to today's global cynicism. I offer a typically Eastern European optimistic suggestion to our global predicament: structural pessimism is a precondition for hope and political action. This is evident in the emergence and subsequent pathway of the Eastern European left at the challenges it faces at the end

of Soviet modernity. Therefore, I will discuss in the last chapter the possibilities of articulating Marxism after Communism.

In the epilogue, I round up my argument and also aim to bring an update on some of the processes that unfolded since my fieldwork ended.

However, almost like in one of Jose Saramago's novels, there is a different possibility of reading this dissertation. A common thread unites chapter 1 and chapter 6: the global, *longue duree* and macro history told in chapter 1 gains more grounding in chapter 6 when linked with the particular generational experience of my informants. Processes that might seem abstract and remote appear in fact quite concrete, local and personal. This is my argument for the idea that, following Georg Lukacs, every history is in fact universal history. So these chapters can be read together.

Chapter 2 and chapter 5 might be read as two different faces of the same coin. In chapter 2 I present the anti-communist historiography and its underlining presuppositions and forces, whereas in chapter 5 I look at how its hegemony is being contested and resisted. In both cases, what lurks into the background and ultimately intersects are two very distinct pathways of intellectual formation that are inextricably linked, albeit in different ways, with the communist experience and its aftermath.

Chapters 3 and 4 also share common threads. In a sense they represent the level of popular culture, the zone of engagement between struggles for historical representation and political mobilization. While the discussion about museum and nostalgia does not pose much concern when subsumed to the level of the popular culture, I am sure that putting the secret police files in the same rubric might raise some eyebrows. But as I argue in chapter 4, the proper way of reading the secret police files today is as detective novels from the Cold War. Only this type of reading can reveal their true political character and might help to avoid some of the libidinal investments in the present in relation to their value of telling the truth. Chapters 3 and 4 present at the very same time the type of popular culture and knowledge engendered by the hegemony of anti-communism, but also the very basis for its subversion and ironic   appropriation.

1. A Class History of Romanian Modernity: Avatars of State Capitalism

The role of this chapter is to set the stage for the rest of the dissertation. I limit myself only to offering a series of theoretical and historical signposts that will enable me to develop my arguments in the rest of the chapters. Consequently, I will not be able to go into particular details or do full justice to the range of discussions, debates and viewpoints expressed in various traditions on the topics I refer to here. A full discussion will require a different research altogether.

In short, the argument I make in this chapter is this: Romanian communism, as a symptom of Soviet communism more generally, was not an alternative modernity, a radically different experience from the western capitalist one.[1] Rather, I regard it is a particular experience within that historical horizon. This enables me to argue that communism was in fact a form of state capitalism[2], particularly embedded, -"slotted"- in the capitalist world-system.[3]

More generally then, I embed the communist period *into* modernity as such. Rather than seeing communism *sui generis*, beginning in 1945 and ending in 1989, I link it historically with wider regional and global dynamics preceding it and fundamentally shaping it according to specific contexts and constellations of factors. Consequently, instead of regarding communism as an aberration, a fall out from history and "normal" historical development as the anti-communist scholarship suggested, I show that communism is inseparable from the trajectory of this region within the global dynamics of capitalism. As such, some of the dilemmas, decisions, pathways, stumbling blocks, resources and pressures faced by the communist regimes in their drive towards modernization cannot be abstracted or disconnected from previous attempts in the region and elsewhere at closing the gap with the west through a vast program of industrialization.[4] To be sure, there exists a longer historical trajectory of which communism is only a specific and highly consequential moment.

I make this argument from the perspective of class formation and class struggle in modernity, which in turn allows me to pinpoint to continuities and *longue duree* phenomena. Moreover, a historically informed class analysis offers the possibility to grasp thick societal dynamics more fully, in their local imbrications and temporal transformations. The main actors of the history I propose here will be social classes and their formation, interaction and struggle. They are not quite the standard actors of

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[1] Jóhann Páll Árnason, *The Future That Failed : Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model*, Routledge Social Futures Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 1993). For one of the first formulations of this idea Sidney Webb and Beatrice Potter Webb, *Soviet Communism; a New Civilisation?*, 2 vols. (London, New York etc.: Longmans, Green and co., ltd., 1935).

[2] Tony Cliff, *Stalinist Russia; a Marxist Analysis* (London,: M. Kidron, 1955); Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* (London: Pluto Press, 1974). For a criticism see, Ernest Mandel, *The Inconsistencies of "State-Capitalism"*, International Marxist Group Pamphlet (London,: International Marxist Group, 1969).

[3] Arrighi.

[4] Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, a Book of Essays* (Cambridge,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).

anthropology but they are important social formations shaping and being shaped by historical dynamics that I seek to grasp. I do not conceive social classes as bounded realities with internal coherence and determinate features. Rather, as I mentioned in the Introduction, I see social classes as relational and as "fields of force".[5]

On this background, more specifically, I will point out the process of Romanian class formation in modernity, in interaction, friction and struggle with regional and global class formations. This will also open up the monolithic view of the communist regimes promoted by anti-communism to a perspective that pays attention to the unfolding class struggles *within* these regimes.

In the tradition of Eric Wolf then, such global-local interconnections are grasped through the lens of changing and interacting modes of production and of surplus appropriation.[6] While I will show that there is no "pure" mode of production clearly reducible to some salient features, I nonetheless presuppose the existence of an encompassing capitalist modern world-system in which my local story is embedded and shaped by.[7] While mainstream and nationalistic narratives have portrayed Eastern European modernity as being an imperfect variant of the western capitalist blueprint, my argument is different. I suggest that this lack of full western features is an effect of global hierarchies sometimes helping, sometimes undermining the local capitalist classes, but certainly being integral to the uneven development on which the global capitalist system thrives.[8]

This angle enables me then to look at communism differently as well. First, I will show that by virtue of the developmentalist logic inherent to these regimes, especially when applied to backward peasant populations, communism led to the creation of classes and class segments bound to come into conflict with each other and to shape the regime's future trajectory. I analyze the communist experience and its demise as the outcome of class struggles and to look at 1989 not as a moment of definitive break, collapse and the pretext to start from scratch, but as a particular juncture in this class struggle, with reverberations during the post-communist transition.

Secondly, instead of simply seeing communism as an Eastern European affair sliced into national experiences, I suggest a view that analyzes its trajectory in the world capitalist dynamics of the 20th century. The Romanian case is highly instructive in

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[5] Kalb, *Expanding Class : Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.*

[6] Eric R. Wolf and Sydel Silverman, *Pathways of Power : Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). My research significantly differs from Kenneth Jowitt's conception that in peasant contexts like Eastern Europe and Romania one should look at status and not at class as characteristic and defining feature in order to understand those societies. In fact, this kind of approach constructed the idea of a distinct moral universe that was destroyed first by capitalism at the end of the 18th century, and then by communism after 1945. See Kenneth Jowitt and University of California Berkeley. Institute of International Studies., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940 : A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Research Series - Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley No 36 (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978). For a different conceptualization of the peasant communities and their relationship to global capitalism see Gavin Smith's Wolfian discussion in Smith.,Chapter 3.

[7] Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System : Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Text ed., Studies in Social Discontinuity (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

[8] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development : Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, Ideas (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: B. Blackwell, 1990).

this regard. Romania became an IMF member in 1972 and then pursued a course of fast industrialization with borrowed western money that engendered various political, social and economic relations but also led to its spectacular collapse after years of austerity. I believe that such an example cannot sustain views about the distinct character of communism and capitalism, of their separation in two bounded civilizational and economic blocs, but instead warrant a perspective that sees communism as state capitalist.

For conventional purposes, this chapter has two parts. In the first part I briefly discuss the Romanian trajectory in modernity prior to 1945 embedded in global capitalist processes of accumulation and production and undergirded by imperial interests and frictions. In the second part, I look at the historical experience of communism anchored in *these* historical trajectories and legacies, and instead of simply assuming the universalization of post-1917 USSR experience across the Eastern bloc, I pinpoint to crucial divergences and differences exemplified by my Romanian case. I will do so by discussing the features of state capitalism and its avatars in the region in the process of industrial modernization.

I. Patterns, Pathways and Paradoxes of World-System Integration: the Romanian case

Moldova and Wallachia –the two principalities precursors to the Romanian nation-state - were two distinct territories formed in the Middle Age, under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. They paid tribute to the Porte consisting of agricultural products and manpower needed to staff the army of the empire.

Their mode of production was feudal and relied on very obsolete agricultural techniques. [9] By mid 18th century, this feudal natural economy based on extracting rent in the form of products was subverted by a hybrid one, the second serfdom. [10] In this mode, the peasants had to offer not only rent in products but also, and more importantly, rent in the form of labor for the direct benefit of the landlord. [11] Therefore, the landlord began to limit the amount of time peasants spent working the land for themselves in order to force them to work for his direct gain. This also led to a process of land enclosures and privatizations that reached a climax in the 1830s. In this new mode, the land ceased to be simply a support for extracting use value, but became the basis for direct accumulation.

This erosion of the old feudal relations was determined, on the one hand, by the penetration of commercial capital in the Romanian principalities through the Greek traders in the first part of the 18th century, and on the other hand by the growth in demand for agricultural products on the world markets already beginning with "the

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[9] For a broader description of feudal economics, mode of production and property relations, both west and east, see Robert Brenner, Economic Backwardness in Eastern Europe in Light of Developments in the West, In 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, 1989). Janos.

[10] Janos.

[11] Karl Marx, Ben Fowkes, and David Fernbach, *Capital : A Critique of Political Economy*, V 1: Penguin Classics (London ; New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1981).

long 16th century".[12] The full access of the principalities to the world market was enabled by a geopolitical confluence in which the Habsburg Empire and the expanding Russian one shared a common interest in liberalizing trade in the Black Sea and Dardanelles against the Ottoman monopoly.

The inflow of cash from the world markets only partially reached the peasantry. Most of it was kept by the landowners and was spent on luxury items purchased from the west and on financing their offspring's education abroad. Moreover, a tougher system of taxation for the peasants was aimed to prevent them from acquiring capital in order to be able to buy out their work obligations to the landlords. In turn, the cash-starved peasantry was unable to sustain the development of an internal market for locally manufactured goods of the emerging light industry.

Emerging industrial entrepreneurs had diverging interests from those of the landed boyars. Instead of "freeing" peasants to become waged laborers, these relations of production locked the peasant working force to the benefit of the big landlords.[13] Not surprisingly then, the emerging urban bourgeoisie and industrial class supported and financed the 1821 and 1848 revolutions directed both against the boyars and against the Porte, which was protecting this social arrangement.

But throughout the 19th century, the emerging industrial class never acquired enough power against the landed aristocracy, for largely two main reasons. First, it retained an interest in the exploitation of land, which prevented a thorough transformation of peasant relations and property. Second, the development of the industry itself was slow because it entailed expensive imports of technology, materials and qualified working class from the west. The lack of capital necessitated foreign loans from western creditors at relatively high interest rates. Continuing to extract surplus from land and thus perpetuate previous relations appeared as a more convenient economic solution.[14]

Eric Wolf noted that the possibility for peasant revolution is higher when significant local power remains in the hands of landlords, but they are unable to enter a coalition with the emerging industrial class and fail to act as leaders of the transition process to industrialization. Meanwhile, the merchant class sees its interests linked with transnational capital and acts as a "comprador bourgeoisie". While capitalistic relations undermine social relations in the countryside, intermediated by the appearance of the leaseholder and the weakening of the bond between the peasantry and the landowner, the change in technology is low and basically agricultural life remains severely backward and dependent.[15]

Such a revolutionary possibility was curtailed in the Romanian context because large segments of the industrial class entered into alliance with the landed aristocracy at the

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[12] Wallerstein.

[13] Brenner, op. cit; Wallerstein, op. cit. Lucrețiu Pătrășcaniu, *Un Veac De Frământări Sociale* (București: Editura Politică, 1969).

[14] Brenner.

[15] Wolf and Silverman. See also Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London,: Penguin P., 1967).

expanse of the peasants.[16] Surely, this was a feature of Central and Eastern European contexts more generally, but in Romania it acquired a particular resonance after the defeat of the 1848 revolution in that it determined a strong unity of the ruling classes against the peasantry which remained politically and economically disenfranchised throughout the 19th century.[17]

Moreover, external pressures magnified these internal developments. The expansion of the Tsarist Empire towards the Danube and the Black Sea entailed a powerful struggle for hegemony in the region and a collision of the Russian and Romanian ruling class' interests. In 1812, the Tsarist Empire annexed Bessarabia – a large part of Moldavian principality – which offered a strategic position to the Danube and to the Black Sea. These ports were important for exporting the Ukrainian grains, which constituted a competition for the Romanian ones on the global markets.

This hit hard the interests of the Romanian boyars.[18] The Romanian landed classes intensified extraction from the peasants and tightened their grip on the land. Russia became the clear enemy and Bessarabia was inscribed as the symbolic figure of Russian imperialism in the region and Romanian nationalism throughout the 19th century. Moreover, the annexation of Bessarabia as a symptom of the divergent regional class interests, inaugurated two centuries of profound anti-Russian sentiments, cultivated and elicited by Romanian ruling classes across generations.

Eric Hobsbawm wrote that starting in the 1830s Eastern Europe was trapped between the rivalry of British and Tsarist Empires over the Turkish question.[19] The British Empire sought to prevent the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire in favor of Russia, which was seeking access through the Balkans to the Mediterranean ports, while defining itself as a protector of Orthodox Slavs. Following its defeat in the Crimean War of 1856, the Tsarist Empire had these ambitions curtailed and its expansion blocked.

One of the direct outcomes of these geopolitical and economic struggles between empires was the formation of the Romanian state in 1859. It suited French and British interests in the region, by preventing the incorporation of the Romanian principalities in a Russian area of dominance. Locally, a unified state allowed the ruling classes to create a bigger national market and to design a more complex system of taxation and state finances. It also led to the creation of a national bank that could lend money for the local industry at better rates than the foreign banks, and generally it enabled a more centralized system of exercising power and of extracting surplus from the peasants.

The new Romanian state linked citizenship primarily to blood and religion. This eliminated the Jews from belonging, and in practice excluded them from citizenship

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[16] For a detailed history of the Romanian bourgeoisie, see Ştefan Zeletin, *Burghezia RomâNă : Originea ŞI Rolul Ei Istoric*, Ed. a 2-a. ed. (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1991).

[17] Andrew C. Janos, Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective. In Jowitt and University of California Berkeley. Institute of International Studies.

[18] This was so also because in this mode of production the possibility of land expansion for agricultural exploitation is the source of extensive economic growth. See Brenner.

[19] E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

until after WWI.[20] The second category of exclusion was the Slavs because of the Russian rivalry. These two pillars of Romanian Otherness were established already in the middle of the 19th century. They will be united a century later, when after 1945 the formation of the Romanian communist state was blamed on the communist Jews coming from Moscow.

By imagining itself western, via the fantasy of Roman descent and the links it allowed with the French, the new Romanian nation state also entailed a rejection of everything regional, especially of the Balkan connection considered backward and Oriental. Western imperial constructions of the Balkans and of the Orient were integrated into the very national code and self-definition of the Romanians. After all, the new state was an "island of Latinity in a Slavic sea", as the official propaganda had it, and therefore it could only be western in spirit and style despite its actual geographical location. Appointing a German king to rule the country after 1866 was also part of the efforts to gender the Romanian state western, while preserving the big estates the disenfranchisement of peasants.

The absence of a strong national movement generated little adhesion and identification with the new state – or to use an old-fashioned term, patriotism. Just like the efforts for unification were top-down and driven by very precise strategic goals, the construction of a national idea reflected the horizon of a segment of the elite and did not rest on popular forms of mobilization. In return, this national idea could not elicit popular enthusiasm, especially in contexts of deep poverty. The Romanian independence of the 1877 was the result of geopolitical calculations and substantially it changed nothing. Moreover, the peasants fought in World War I not for the country, but for land.

This might appear counterintuitive given the nationalistic frenzy that followed in the interwar period and during communism. But the two phenomena are connected. Without a powerful national liberation movement defining the new state capable of eliciting forms of *political* not biological or traditional identifications, the cosmopolitan version of national identity imagined for western eyes opened the possibility for the fascist nationalism of the interwar period to emerge as its direct criticism. The figure of the Romanian peasants could thus return not as a social and economic category in need of emancipation, but as some sort of ancient guarantor of Romaniannes, the true embodiment of the national spirit. Its authenticity was opposed to the falsity and foreign subordination of the elites.

After unification and independence, by late 1870s the Romanian state entered into a new phase of development in keeping with global transformations. The exports of Romanian grains plummeted because of the competition faced on the world markets from cheaper grains coming from the US and Argentina.[21] Romanian landowners sunk into debt and some lost their lands to creditors. This made the development of industry urgent. The state introduced protective measures for industry, a new system of taxation and, more importantly, measures for the concentration of capital in big enterprises.

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[20] Janos.Zigu Ornea, *Anii 30. Extrema dreaptă românească* (București: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995).
[21] Wolf.

But the growing state bureaucracy and national army led to the accumulation of large foreign debts. Since the economy was too small and underdeveloped to allow for significant incomes through direct taxation, foreign debts appeared as the only solution for survival. At the end of the 19th century, Germany had in its hands three fifths of Romanian debt.[22] The emergent class of local industrialists, strongly linked with the state bureaucracy through the Liberal Party, succeeded in imposing the ideology of protectionism, but politically they had to refrain from enacting it, in order to be able to secure loans from foreign creditors who were also the main exporters towards Romania of industrial products.[23] Protectionism to develop industry failed, but state bureaucracy grew immensely.

Alexander Gerschenkron noted three divergent paths of industrial modernization. In the West (especially in the case of England) the financing of industry was done with capital obtained through accumulation by dispossession. In this situation, there was no real need for the banking sector and its credit mechanisms to kick-start the industrialization process. By contrast, in France and especially in Germany, the industrialization spurt was possible only through the credit offered by state and private banks. This required the existence of surplus capital that could be circulated as credit but also the existence of a developed market able to absorb the products of the industry. Finally, in Russia –significantly the most backward of these cases – the lack of capital, the under-development of an internal market and the absence of economic discipline made impossible the development of a genuine banking and credit systems. In this case it was the state bureaucracy, through centralizing and military means, that extracted capital and directed it towards the industrialization efforts. It was entirely a top-down effort orchestrated by the state bureaucracy in conjunction with the local owners of industrial capital. For Gerschenkron this perspective is instructive to understand the entire development of Russian industry between 1861 and 1958, and so bypassing the customary breaks supposedly produced by the Bolshevik revolution.[24]

The Romanian case is a mixture between the Central European model and the Russian one, alternating between foreign credit and vast state interventions almost military in style (largely for extracting taxes[25]) through its bureaucracy, especially after World War I and after the formation of Greater Romania, when the needs for capital increased exponentially. In fact, this was the reason the Romanian ruling class pursued the territorial annexations of 1918: to enlarge the base for taxation and to incorporate parts of the Austro-Hungarian industry developed in Transylvania.[26] Of course, this was possible politically and military because the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires -the three Empires whose rivalry shaped the region for over a century and half – collapsed.

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[22] John Michael Montias, in Chirot.pp. 65.

[23] See also Andrew C. Janos, op, cit, pp. 93.

[24] Gerschenkron., pp. 14-20. See also Alexander Gerschenkron, *Continuity in History, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968).

[25] Janos.

[26] Patrascaniu.

After the war, King Ferdinand I accomplished the land reform in 1923 by passing over 40% of the arable land in the property of the peasants.[27] This opened up the countryside entirely to capitalist relations and to the possibility of buying and selling land. The division of land to small peasant families led to a drastic fall of the agricultural output, which in turn led to dramatic decreases of cereal exports.[28] What is more, Romania exported a large amount of grains when the global price was low, and failed to do so when the price was high.[29]

The complete subordination of the agricultural exports to the global price fluctuations led to the accumulation of problems in the agricultural sectors and to significant pauperization of the agricultural producers. Moreover, the industrial program sustained by the state also added its burdens: by heavily taxing agricultural exports in order to collect money for the state finances and by banning the imports of industrial equipment necessary for agriculture (like tractors), the agrarian sector was de facto brought to ruin. By the end of the interwar period, with a surface and population doubled in size, the output of agricultural production barely reached the pre-war levels.[30] The agricultural sector badly needed structural reforms and already during the reign of king Carol II, there were plans for the collectivization of agricultural lands into bigger and more effective land plots in order to help financing the industrial growth. To this end, Carol II introduced a Five-Year Plan.[31]

A similar situation existed in the business of extracting and exporting oil, the second pillar of the interwar economy. Already at the end of the 19th century, the exploitation of oil reserves became a profitable industry, highly dominated by foreign capital, especially German, Dutch and British. These trends were magnified after WWI when extraction intensified. Because the internal needs were limited due to little industrialization, most of the oil was exported as raw material but the profits were pocketed by the global capitalists and by some fractions of the Romanian ones tied to this extractive and rent-based industry.[32]

This dynamic of the agricultural and oil exports renders clear the peripheral status of the country during the interwar period, entirely dependent on global demand and the fluctuation of global prices for its raw materials. Moreover, it was subordinated to the fluxes of global financial capitals the national bourgeoisie badly needed in order to buy technology for the development of its own industry. But by restricting and taxing imports for industrial products in order to protect the local industry, the price of industrial products were exorbitant and few could afford them. With a pauperized population living in the countryside, there was no chance to develop an internal market for local industrial goods. Despite protectionism and nationalism, without solving the agricultural question, the growth of the Romanian industry was meager. In fact, the principal buyer of Romanian industrial products was, predictably, the state, largely for infrastructural projects and especially for the army. But this only raised state deficits and it had to borrow more.

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[27] Janos, op cit. pp. 103.
[28] Bogdan Murgescu, *România şi Europa: Acumularea decalajelor economice* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010). Pp. 223.
[29] Murgescu. 234.
[30] Murgescu, pp. 223.
[31] Janos.
[32] Murgescu, pp. 243-245.

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In the wake of the Second World War, the economic and social situation of the country was bleak. During the war, economically and military the country was integrated into the sphere of the Nazi war machine, entirely subordinating oil extraction and the local industry to its goals, without resistance from the local classes. After the war, even though Romanian entered the Soviet sphere of influence, it had to pay war reparations for its role in helping the Nazis.

II. State Capitalism and the Acceleration of Social Differentiation

In the previous section I traced the formation and consolidation of the Romanian nation-state in the juxtaposition of global and local dynamics. I showed that the Romanian ruling class emerged and consolidated through its incorporation into western processes of production and accumulation beginning in the "long 16th century", but precisely by virtue of this incorporation -based mainly on the export of raw agrarian products on the world market - it could not prevent the reproduction of subordination and ultimately (semi)-peripheralization. This particular form of global integration had as a local consequence the accumulation and exacerbation of economic and social disparities, largely expressed in the persistence of a highly exploited, disenfranchised and backward peasant population. This retarded the development of cities and of industry while it magnified the size and role of the state bureaucracy, exerting military power in relation to the local population for the extraction of taxes, while also being heavily dependent on foreign credit. This was, by and large, the situation faced by the communists when they come to power in Romania. They had to respond to it with the local resources at hand, but also within the coordinates of the political and ideological assemblage offered by the Soviet system triumphant in 1945. It is important therefore to specify theoretically the basic features of Soviet communism.

What was State Capitalism?[33]

Communism in Eastern Europe put an end to the agrarian societies still dominant at the end of the Second World War. In so doing they were more radical than the bourgeois revolutions in the West, since this liquidation of the old relations was done based on a highly modernist principle not by the bourgeoisie but by the Communist Party. The Party definitively altered the previous societies, dispensing with the old nobilities, families, churches, national mythologies, and ruling elites while putting in place societies largely premised upon highly modern, secular, industrial relations.[34] Furthermore, communism created economies fully based on money and wage labor, it expanded the production, consumption and circulation of industrial commodities and in the process utterly upgraded the civil infrastructure by building roads, flats, railroads, electrical plants and cities and implemented a vast program of general education.

In short, communism radically modernized backward societies based on western modernity's blueprints, sometimes even exceeding the performance of the western

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[33] In this section I will make just basic and general observations and therefore I will keep references at a minimum. My purpose is not to engage a particular literature in detail but to give an overall sense of where I place myself theoretically in relation to this topic. As such, I will not be able to develop a full argument and support it through extensive debates in the field, but only be able to offer an outline of it.
[34] Tamas.

model itself. These dramatic transformations were underpinned, undeniably and inevitably, by tragedies and horrors, by brutality and force. Nonetheless, this was nothing strange or deviant from the reality of western modernity, itself made possible by the horrors of colonialism, imperialism, slavery and accumulation by dispossession. Only that in communism, these processes played out in a very short period of time, a few decades only, and in the space of two or three generations.

Their desire for change was rooted in the communist belief, in the desire for radical and ultimate change. That this desire was first muted and then abandoned throughout the course of the post-war trajectory of these regimes does not change the initial goal. Communism was in fact the first major attempt to offer a global solution to the deadlocks of western modernity, to devise a plausible alternative to its pitfalls, so much so after the capitalistic crisis of the 1930s and the advent of Nazism.[35] Rather than simply being an alternative modernity as some analyses have claimed,[36] the Soviet modernity sought to offer a dialectical surpassing of the western one.

The overall developmentalist logic of communism was best encapsulated by Lenin's 1921 well-known quip that communism is the power of the soviets plus the electrification of the whole country. The Bolsheviks and the intellectuals and artists associated with the Party shared a deep commitment to the virtues of high industry, cutting-edge technology and modern inventions –sometimes taken to unconceivable extremes.[37] Clearly, the Bolsheviks wanted to have the benefits produced by capitalist industry, especially its technology, without the contradictions capitalism necessarily entails. But rather than overcoming capitalism, the communist regime managed in fact to bring it fully into being in Eastern Europe and expand it globally. In hindsight, offered by the end of the Cold War, communism appears in fact to have acted as a sort of bloodline for western capitalist modernity, extending its reach across the globe and helping it overcome its structural impasses and crises.

This was so also because in the process of their industrialization and modernization, the communist states remained highly dependent upon the technological innovations produced in the west. They had to import them by paying in hard currency, which simply prolonged their underdevelopment and dependency in relation to the capitalist core. By late 1970s, the communist countries lost touch with the technological innovation developing in the west, affecting especially the relations and forces of production. The collapse was near.

It is also true that, as Alexander Gerschenkron noted, "*no general ideology and no specialized theory were available to guide the uncertain steps of the innovators.*"[38] Far from deriving from some pre-established Marxist ideology, the Soviet system emerged out of very contingent pressures and set of relations embedded in *longue duree* processes. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the outcome of a very particular junction of horizontal and vertical struggles over political and economic command. The Bolsheviks ascendance to power came from the fact that they skillfully and shrewdly exploited this moment by seizing control of the crumbling

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[35] David Priestland, *The Red Flag : A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2009).
[36] Árnason.
[37] See Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance : A Cultural History of Russia*, 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).
[38] Gerschenkron, *Continuity in History, and Other Essays*. pp. 481

Russian Empire in the name of the working class, most actively organized in soviets in a handful of towns. Then, Bolsheviks had to face the dilemma whether to continue class struggle within and outside the borders of the state –that is, to internationalize the revolution worldwide- or to try to consolidate their power first within the borders of the new state. They chose the latter, also following the defeat of the revolution in Germany and Hungary, and therefore the principle of class struggle was subordinated to the interests of constructing the new state.

The consolidation of power entailed in fact the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and reproduction. But the state, not the workers, became the proprietor and manager of all spheres of life through central planning. This called for an active role of the state and party bureaucracies, increasingly fusing together under the leadership of the Party. Moreover, the entire construction acquired the structure of a highly centralized military machine, organizing the society top-down and in authoritarian fashion for a Blitzkrieg against backwardness and underdevelopment.

But these are the precise features of state capitalism, cogently expressed by Anton Pannekoek:

> The term "State Capitalism" is frequently used in two different ways: first, as an economic form in which the state performs the role of the capitalist employer, exploiting the workers in the interest of the state. The federal mail system or a state-owned railway are examples of this kind of state capitalism. In Russia, this form of state capitalism predominates in industry: the work is planned, financed and managed by the state; the directors of industry are appointed by the state and profits are considered the income of the state…[39]

Similarly, Raymond Williams defined state capitalism as the system in which the economic activity is undertaken by the state, which organizes production in large state-owned enterprises based on waged labor and geared towards the production of commodities, and appropriates the surplus-value that is then partly re-invested and partly redistributed through state channels.[40] For Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Wilhelm Liebknecht state capitalism was the ultimate stage of bourgeois capitalism, the moment when it reached its full monopolistic drive.[41] For Lenin, faced with the tasks of reconstructing the country during NEP, state capitalism appeared as a necessary temporary stage towards withering away of the state. For Toni Cliff, the main proponent and critic of the concept of state capitalism in relation to Soviet communism, the basic features of state capitalism and the defeat of the workers' state could be traced back to the first Five Year Plan when the initial troika involved in making decisions about production (the workers' trade unions, the party cell and the technical management) was subverted and replaced by the centralized party bureaucracy.[42]

[39] Pannekoek, State Capitalism and Dictatorship, 1936. Marxists.org.

[40] Raymond Williams, *Keywords : A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[41] See also Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism : A Popular Outline*, New ed., Little Lenin Library (New York: International Publishers, 1969).

[42] Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia*.

By inscribing the bureaucracy as the agent of history and social basis of the new regime, the Party created two important contradictions. First, an ideological one, since the legitimacy of the new regime was premised upon the proletarians. Secondly, a political and economic one: the frictions between the workers, the bureaucracy and the Party set the foundations for the class struggle *inside* the communist regimes. Trotsky, as one of the first critics of Stalinism, referred to the Soviet state as a dysfunctional proletarian state in which the bureaucracy of the party took control.[43] This set the stage, quite early on, for the irreconcilable struggle between the working class, the bureaucracy and the party nomenklatura, which constituted the thread of the entire existence of the communist state.[44]

At first, this class struggle emerged on the background of previous class antagonisms, most notably between peasants and emerging industrial workers. The solution envisaged by the Soviets to solve this contradiction and finance the "industrial spurt" was the collectivization of land. Collectivization radically transformed the country into an industrial one, and established an economy that was capable to outperform the much more developed German one and thus set the bases for the Soviet victory during WWII. [45] Or, Alexander Gerschenkron wrote "*to secure steady supplies of agricultural products to the growing city populations, without the necessity of providing a sufficient quid pro quo in terms of industrial consumers' goods, was indeed, an essential condition of rapid industrialization. In this sense the collectivization drive was, from the view point of the Soviet government, eminently successful*". [46]

Collectivization, rapid large-scale heavy industrialization and the defeat of Nazism would have not been possible without the political monopoly of the communist Party over the state capitalist economy of the country. If Lenin invented the vanguard party as the political institution through which the communists could foment revolutionary feelings, Stalin took it a step further and envisaged the party as the leading force of a modern state.

But top-down Party mobilization based on a mixture of coercion, military centralization and ideological commitment had its own limits in relation to wider economic and social pressures. The task of mastering a modern industrial society required the consent and active participation of the technical intelligentsia and of the industrial specialists. Already by 1931, Stalin replaced the revolutionary principle of equal payment with differential payment for the bureaucrats and technical intelligentsia. Managers, engineers, technical staff were now paid according to performance targets and also benefited from extra-pecuniary facilities, such as better housing, special shops and better consumption items. Payment differential in turn magnified the communist class struggle and accelerated social differentiation. This led to the appearance of the so-called "New Class" – a class of bureaucrats and intellectuals that took over the Party-State and subordinated the workers to their

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[43] Leon Trotsky and Max Eastman, *The Revolution Betrayed* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2004).
[44] Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (London ; New York: Verso, 1989).
[45] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes : The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991.*
[46] Gerschenkron, *Continuity in History, and Other Essays*.pp. 479

control. [47] After all, the very existence of a plan requires highly specialized intellectuals able to master complicated mathematical formulas, statistical models and macroeconomic data.[48]

Anton Pannekoek made the following remarks on this point:

> The goal of the working class is liberation from exploitation. This goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting the bourgeoisie. It can only be realised by the workers themselves being master over production. Nevertheless it is possible and quite probable that state capitalism will be an intermediary stage, until the proletariat succeeds in establishing communism. This, however, could not happen for economic but for political reasons. State capitalism would not be the result of economic crises but of the class struggle. In the final stage of capitalism, the class struggle is the most significant force that determines the actions of the bourgeoisie and shapes state economy.[49]

Pannekoek preserved the focus on class struggle as the ultimate dynamic within state capitalism. Increasingly during the 1970s this struggle accentuated, particularly between the technical intelligentsia and the party echelons. Intelligentsia was politically subordinated to the party bureaucrats in charge of setting the Plan and ensuring its realization, and economically and ideologically subordinated to the needs of the working class. However, the intelligentsia was better educated - a process fostered directly by the state in keeping with its needs for running the economy. Already by late 1950s the Party switched from a policy of promotion based on ideological conformity to a recruitment of cadres based on professionalism and diplomas. While in the Party structures connections and ideological determination continued to prevail, in the sphere of the state institutions an ethos of professionalism and competence emerged.

Excluded from political control and prevented from accumulating capital due to the regime's commitment to equality and redistribution, but also because of the failures of the system as such which could not generate more money for its specialists, the intelligentsia isolated itself in the cultural sphere and accumulated symbolic capital and cultural distinctive marks. It came at odds both with the party apparatchiks –seen as incompetent and unnecessarily complicating their work- and with the working class –seen as the main beneficiary of the regime and its staunch supporter.

These frictions culminated in the 1980s attempts at liberalizing and reforming the system. In fact, these attempts led to the system's collapse, more specifically, to the demise of the Party-State and its version of state capitalism as well as of the developmentalist logic undergirding it. It is true also that this collapse unfolded on the background of sweeping changes affecting the capitalist world system in which the Soviet experience was inserted and linked with in various dependent ways.

[47] Milovan Djilas, *The New Class : An Analysis of the Communist System*, A Harvest/Hbj Book (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).
[48] György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).
[49] Pannekoek. Op. cit.

Neoliberal Stalinism[50]

Initially, the development of communism in Romania followed the general Soviet trajectory. After assuming full power in 1948, the Party immediately started to implement the Soviet recipe for extensive development: the collectivization of land and the nationalization and expansion of industry. Similar to the USSR case, the Romanian Party State lacked the proper cadres to implement its policies and had to create and train them in the very process of exercising power[51], or had to incorporate various segments of bourgeois specialists, despite officially being classified as enemies of the people.

But soon, a new trajectory emerged, shaped concomitantly by local pressures and global opportunities. Romania had to export most of its products towards the USSR as part of the war reparations. This slowed down its post-war development and subordinated it to USSR for technology and industrial products. It was a similar situation of dependency experienced by Romania in relation to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in mid 19th century. Just like a century before, the local ruling class could rely only on two sources of capital for industrial development: the agricultural sector and foreign credit. While the former was being exhausted by the needs of exports towards the USSR, the latter was inaccessible due to the Cold War configurations.

Moreover, the Soviet plans of organizing the division of labor within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) envisaged Romania as a producer of raw agricultural goods. In fact, this entailed the continued subordination of the local agriculture to Soviet interests, a fact displeasing the Romanian communists that sought to modernize the country along industrial lines and thus justify their monopoly of power.

These plans, pushed the Romanian communists away from the Soviet interests and towards an independent policy. But this was done along, not against, the Soviet industrializing blueprint. De facto, the Romanians embarked upon the pathway of heavy industrialization and production of capital-intensive goods.

Just like a century before, the Romanian ruling class saw its interests completely at odds with those of the Russians and proceeded on a path oriented towards the west, marked by significant rapprochement in foreign policy with western powers like the USA, UK and France during the 1960s and 1970s. Also the Party maintained relations with Tito's Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement, with China after the Sino-Soviet split, and took a neutral stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The peak of this independent agenda was reached in august 1968 when Nicolae Ceaușescu condemned publicly the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

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[50] I thank Don Kalb for suggesting this concept. I think it expresses very well what I am trying to convey here through the Romanian example: instead of seeing western neoliberalism and Eastern European state capitalism in disjunction from each other, only reunited after the 1989 transformations, I suggest we should look at them in the same juncture, thus offering a more complex and integrated discussion of both. The trajectory of Ceausescu's Romania is indeed paradigmatic for this endeavor.

[51] See a discussion of this point in relation to the Romanian collectivization in Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege : The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Especially this episode led to a nationalist frenzy. The Romanian Communist Party abandoned the concept of class struggle as the motor of history and embraced instead a view that highlighted the struggle for independence and liberation of the entire people, led by the Communist Party.[52] At the same time communist nationalism also borrowed something from the language and ideological underpinning of the national liberation movements emerging in the global South.[53] This was an anti-imperial nationalism, directed both against the capitalistic west but also against the hegemonic USSR. From this perspective, it was in line with similar movements springing worldwide in 1968, despite developing sui generis features in the late 1980s.

Franz Fanon noted that nationalism directed against the Empire has as an outcome the consolidation of the national ruling elite over the local population.[54] This was exactly the outcome in the Romanian case too, where nationalism became a *carte blanche* for the party apparatchiks to pursue the modernization of the country, unchecked by other social forces or groups. Any opposition was labeled anti-national and imperialistic.

This is a more general feature of national bourgeoisies. They are locked into two different struggles: a global one against other national elites for accumulation, and a local one against the national working classes. In this context, nationalism plays the role of rallying the working classes to the cause of the national elites, sometimes against the former's interests.[55] In Romania too, nationalism linked the party echelons with the working classes in an effort of industrial modernization. Nationalism was mobilized as a device for gathering support for capital accumulation and development but also as a criterion for internal redistribution.[56]

In order to secure capital for its development plans, in 1971 Romania joined GATT, while in 1972 it was the first Eastern Bloc country to join the IMF and the World Bank. Concomitantly, the country rebranded itself as a "developing country", seeking preferential treatment from western and southern countries, and a status akin to that of the non-aligned countries.[57] This realignment entailed important shifts in the economy. Western companies were allowed to open joint ventures in the country, and by 1974 Romania was trading more with western countries than with its counterparts in the communist world.[58]

By and large, the Romanian industrialization plan worked, so that in 1989 manufacture accounted for more than 50% of the GDP while this sector of the economy employed half of the working force.[59] The country had one of the biggest

[52] Florin Constantiniu, *De La RăUtu ȘI Roller La Mușat ȘI Ardeleanu* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2007). Vlad Georgescu and Radu Popa, *Politică ȘI Istorie : Cazul ComunișTilor RomâNi, 1944-1977* (București: Humanitas, 1991).

[53] Don Kalb, Global South: Anthropological Reflections.

[54] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth,: Penguin, 1967).

[55] Arrighi et al; ibid.

[56] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeaușEscu's Romania*.

[57] Daniela Gabor, *Central Banking and Financialization : A Romanian Account of How Eastern Europe Became Subprime*, Studies in Economic Transition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Murgescu.

[58] Gabor.

[59] Cornel Ban, "Sovereign Debt, Austerity, and Regime Change : The Case of Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania," *East European Politics and Society* 26, no. 4 (2012).

industrial growth rates on the continent, industrial production being 44 times higher in 1989 than in 1950, while in the process the industrial working force grew fourfold.[60] This "industrial spurt" led to the creation of heavy industry, especially energy-intensive ones, such as steel and petrochemical refineries.

Romania was only minimally affected by the 1971 oil crisis, mainly because it was able to rely on its domestic oil supplies. While as a result of the crisis exports to the western countries declined, it could reorient exports and seal barter agreements with oil reach countries in the Persian Gulf. Also, the availability of dollars from the oil countries in the international financial markets allowed access to cheap credits circulated through western banks used for financing further industrial developments.

However, for most of the 1970s, even though the interest rates were low, Romania was cautious to incur too much debt.[61] But the pressures exerted by the second oil crisis of 1979 forced the government into extensive borrowings in order to be able to maintain the supply of oil to its petrochemical industry. While at the beginning of the 1970s, Romania was an exporter of oil, by the end of the decade it transformed into an importing country, due to the expansion of the refining sector. In 1980, the Romanian industry required 16 million tons of oil compared to 5 million in 1975.[62] But the oil crisis overlapped with a financial crisis as well largely triggered by the increase of interests rates on sovereign debt, which signaled in fact a reorientation towards financial speculations for profit accumulation of the western core countries.

Cornel Ban summarized the sudden accumulation of debt and the increasing pressures exerted for servicing it:

> According to World Bank data, between 1976 and 1981 Romania's foreign debt went from $0.5 billion (or 3 percent of GDP) to $10.4 billion (or 28 percent of GDP and 30 percent of exports). In 1981, interest rate payments reached $3 billion, up from barely $8 million six years before. Over the period 1980–1982, the country had to pay $6 billion to foreign creditors, and by 1982 Romania needed 80 percent of its hard currency exports to finance foreign debt.[63]

At first, the regime turned towards IMF for help, signing a three-year agreement in 1981. The main goal of the agreement was to improve the efficiency of the Romanian economy. Already in 1979, the new economic policies introduced by the Party sought to reorient production towards value-added targets rather than simply quantitative out-puts, trying to address the pressing question of stockpiling in certain sectors.[64] The IMF program aimed at making state enterprises less dependent on the state budget and function on a profit-based logic, within and outside the country, while making them more responsible for capital allocation and investment. The logic behind these "structural adjustment" plans was that by making state enterprises more sensitive to world market relations, their productivity will increase and they will be able to accumulate capital at a faster pace.

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid. pp. 758.
[64] Gabor.

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But, in 1984 Ceauşescu decided not to renew the agreement with the IMF and embarked instead on a sui generis austerity program. The main reason for this decision was political. By following the IMF policies the party was losing its grip on the production in favor of market mechanisms. This run the risk of generating centrifugal reactions and fragment the political power, especially in favor of the technical intelligentsia.

The austerity program entailed massive cuts in domestic consumption and curtailed virtually all imports. Capital investment was now directed towards debt repayment, which negatively affected the industrial output. In each of the last five years of the communist regime, the industrial production decreased by 1.5%, leading to an all time low in 1989, when the economy registered a minus 5% growth.[65]

The country's advantage of having a cheap qualified and disciplined work force that could produce cheap products for export was annulled by the technological inferiority of the industry and compounded during the austerity measures by the need to rely on import substitution, which made its products less attractive to foreign markets. In addition, the internal market was too small to compensate for the lack of exports and crucially it could not generate the necessary dollars needed to repay the debts and buy more technology and energy resources. While the goal of paying back the debts was largely achieved, the price for it was that it left the economy in ruins and the society in shatters. The attempt to brutally and radically cut off the country from the global financial flows and credit dependency proved elusive and ended in disaster and the regime soon collapsed.

In its efforts for fast industrialization what the Communist Party seemed to disregard was the global capitalist context in which it operated and the fundamentally capitalist nature of the industrialization program. In this context, the economy of the country could not be simply sealed off within the national borders at will and instead remained highly dependent on global capital and vulnerable to its crises and transformations. Some of the explanations of the fall of communism point out to the erroneous decisions of the communist leaders, unable to understand market dynamics due to their inflexible ideology and lack of genuine, unbiased information about the real state of the economy.[66] By contrast, I suggest we should look for explanations in the overall global capitalist setting in which these countries embarked on projects of high industrialization.

When countries like Romania reached the 1950s levels of western industrialization (sometimes at the end of the 1970s), western countries already started to dismantle theirs and de-localize production to peripheral countries, where they enjoyed competitive advantages and cheaper work force. This global process of delocalization of production from the west to the peripheries was in fact a major process of de-industrialization of the core countries, following a crisis of production and accumulation in the industrial sector.[67]

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[65] Gabor

[66] Glaeser.

[67] Andrew Kliman, *The Failure of Capitalist Production : Underlying Causes of the Great Recession* (London: Pluto Press, 2012).

This process usually goes by the name of neoliberalism: the set of policies and the ideological assemblage that justified developed by the capitalist class in western Europe and the USA in order to deal with the crisis of accumulation and the diminishing rates of profits.[68] The problem with this theory of neoliberalism and with the explanations derived from it, is that it boils everything down to a western story and to the agency of a handful of elites (either Reagan or Thatcher, or the "Chicago Boys"), at the expense of an account of global structural determinants.[69]

By contrast, the policies of neoliberalism would not have been possible had there not been a fundamental misbalance, an uneven development in the world system as such. Development in the East (and South) was possible based on loans from western countries. These loans created the industrial infrastructure and the cheap industrial labor force capable to facilitate the de-localization of the western industries. This locked them into a relation of dependency and vulnerability, even though it also led to very palpable modernizing achievements. Moreover, the demand for loans sped up the financialization drive of the world-system and accelerated processes of globalization and transnationalization. Far from preventing the expansion of global capital, Eastern European communism in fact facilitated it.

The context of the Cold War in these developments is not negligible either. For example, the Keynesian policies implemented by western countries during the 1950s and 1960s were inseparable from the development of a huge military-industrial complex financed by the state in order to fight the USSR. This also entailed state aid for industries and consumer goods, but also for universities and top-notch research. On the other hand, the investment in military industry deprived other sectors, like manufacture, of important funds. Also, in an attempt to bring Japan and West Germany on the US side, the government allowed them preferential export deals for manufactured goods, sometimes at the expense of local producers, who saw their profits dropping. This contributed to the overall crisis of production, which forced them to lay off workers at home and move production abroad.[70]

It is simplistic therefore to say that before 1989 the West was moving towards a service-based and informational society, while the East was crushing under the burden of its underperforming Fordist industry, thus rehashing the standard opposition between the neoliberal west and the communist east. Rather, I see the two connected as Romania's answer to the debt crisis testifies.

The first measure, backed by the IMF, presupposed the standard introduction of market relations among state enterprises, an idea that resurfaced again after 1989, this time at a faster pace. The second response, of dramatic austerity, entailed in fact cuts in state expenditure, that is, precisely the type of solution that has been advocated after the 2008 crisis as well all around the world. Identifying Ceauşescu's harsh policies with some return to old Stalinist measures is mystifying since it does not take into account the profound capitalistic nature of the crisis and of its responses. Rather, what is important to note in this case is that the Stalinist Party-State offered the

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[68] Harvey.

[69] Don Kalb, "Thinking About Neoliberalism as If the Crisis Was Actually Happening," *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 3 (2012).

[70] Ellen Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism : The Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 2004).

possibility for the implementation of such a radical austerity plan despite the grievances of the population, until it reached it desired goals. The political form developed by Stalinism to orchestrate top-down modernization and fight backwardness was now serving capitalistic goals of returning profits on western capital speculations.

These dramatic changes in the economy, rooted in local and global dynamics, entailed a significant shift in the class composition of the country as well. The industrialization process led to the creation not only of industrial workers, increasingly highly specialized, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the consolidation of a class of technical (and humanist) intelligentsia indispensable for the requirements of production and export. Gradually, especially during the bleak 1980s, this class of specialists had its interest closer to their western counterparts than to the bureaucracy and the apparatchiks.

Before 1989, both the intelligentsia and the lower echelons of the party were united in their belief that a dramatic reform was needed. The former were frustrated that they had an education they couldn't capitalize upon within the communist state, being politically subordinated to the Party and its shifting economic policies. Moreover, their education couldn't guarantee them the same lifestyle as that of their counterparts in the West, because the communist state was determined to keep workers relatively well paid. For this class, communism lost all its ideological force and its members were tempted by the figure of the expert-bureaucrat emerging in the west.[71] For them, the only viable solution was the rapid dismantling of the communist state and its political barriers, and the opening toward western capitalism, since they were in a better position than anyone else to manage and take advantage of this opening.

Nonetheless, prior to 1989 the intelligentsia was not able to give political representation to its demands and never succeeded in giving its interests an expression of class solidarity, preferring instead to withdraw into an area of private cultural consumption. Concomitantly, the lower and local ranks of the Communist Party were prevented from fully exploiting their strategic position within the communist economic process. Especially at local levels, many communist apparatchiks managed to acquire important powers and to control the production and distribution of goods, sometimes making them the de facto architects of the economic system. The ossified structure of the Communist Party simply prevented them from acquiring the status of full capitalists, as it would happen for many of them after 1989.

At the same time, their mobility was limited even within the Party itself, the lower ranks being practically confined to inferior positions as a result of power being confiscated at the top by Ceaușescu's family and his acolytes. Despite this, they never attained that degree of political unity that could exert enough pressure on Ceaușescu's party leadership and determine his replacement with a more reform oriented leader, as it happened in the USSR, with the advent of Gorbachev. Instead, they chose to continue the process of accumulation and sought to weaken the party and the state from within for their own gains.

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[71] Brucan.

It was only in the context of external pressures both from the West through the Reagan aggressive foreign policy and from the East during Gorbachev's reforms that this alliance of the technical intelligentsia and second echelon party apparatchiks mobilized against the top-tier of the Romanian communist party and managed to orchestrate, through the mobilization of workers, the Romanian revolution of 1989, the bloodiest in the region. This put an end to Ceauşescu's Romania and to the political monopoly of the Communist Party-State.

But the interests of the intelligentsia and the lower ranks of the party coincided only in the short term, as an aspiration to topple Ceauşescu's regime. Once this common goal was achieved in December 1989, their antagonistic interests soon became apparent and their alliance was short-lived. The former party members and its associated bureaucracy obtained privileged positions within the post-communist economy and retained close political links with the successor of the Communist Party. By contrast, the intelligentsia found itself again in opposition and could only ask for more neoliberal reforms and for opening up to the global capital to its own advantage. These two sides offered the main social and political antagonism of the transition period, especially since the workers as a class was disbanded together with the former industrial complex, considered a heap of scrap.

In this new class struggle, anti-communism was salient and a tool in the hands of the intelligentsia seeking political representation. The local owners of capital were criticized by the anti-communist discourse for being communists while they were in fact the new capitalistic class of the country. Anti-communism prevented a criticism of the local owners of capital emerging from the fall of communism as capitalists, by moralizing the debate and by pointing towards their past not towards their present. But this was an ideological maneuver: this moral high ground prepared the terrain for political claim making by the intelligentsia. Anti-communism was a way to fight the local owners of capital in favor of the corporate foreign capital. In 2004, the symbolic and political effects of anti-communism came to full fruition by the election of Traian Băsescu as President –the embodiment of the communist technical intelligentsia formed in communism and aspiring to political power ever since, and which ultimately organized the condemnation of the communist past. This will be focus of the next chapters.

But to conclude this chapter, I suggested a history that regards class formation and class struggle as the driving force of modernity. This allowed me to embed the communist experience – understood from this perspective and through the prims of its foundations and economic and social effects as state-capitalism – into a wider pathway of modern development undergirded by particular patterns, configurations and determinations which have a longer temporality and continuity than traditional historical accounts of communism as a distinct period can convey. As I mentioned in the beginning, my intention was only to place some signposts along this road and prepare the ground for a future, more meticulous, exploration. But equipped with this minimal orientation map of the communist past, developed from a dialectical perspective of structuring global and local forces, I can navigate in the next chapters the terrain of anti-communism, which was after all the hegemonic ideology of transition about the communist past. To unraveling its multiple threads I now turn.

2. Writing History at the End of History

On December 18th 2006 the Romanian Parliament assembled in a special session, broadcasted live on television. Despite the solemnity of the moment the atmosphere closely resembled that of a soccer game that went astray. While the Romanian president Traian Băsescu was giving his speech, a number of MPs from the Social Democrat opposition Party were booing, showing red cards and whistling at the President. The chairman of the session was trying, half-heartedly, to restore the order, thus to no avail. The President continued his speech though his words were hardly audible in the growing noise.

At one point, Vadim Tudor, the head of the nationalist party Romania Mare, took out a mocking poster showing the President in prison clothing. A handful of aggrieved supporters of the president attempted to confiscate the insulting banner by pushing with Vadim and his men right under the president's lectern.

While the president was reaching his conclusions, the attention moved towards the VIP balcony where distinguished guests invited to attend this meeting were seated. Chief among them were some of the most prominent Romanian post-communist intellectuals that came to support the President during his speech. Apparently, Vadim Tudor was trying to break in and was threatening to throw everybody over. The intellectuals were making desperate signs for help in the direction of the security forces, asking for their immediate intervention. The timely arrival of some MPs and security officials prevented Vadim entering a fistfight with one of Romania's leading intellectuals, Horia Patapievici. The end of the President's speech brought a general sigh of relief and a mixture of applauses and booing. The live transmission also ended at this point and was followed by commercials.

This was the special session of the Romanian Parliament in which the President condemned communism as "illegitimate and criminal", days before the country's much-awaited accession to the European Union on January 1st, 2007. As the President rendered clear in the speech jammed by his opponents, this symbolic gesture represented the end of the post-communist transition and a return of the country to its "natural" historical trajectory - that is, Europe. Communism was finally over and its legacy surpassed. Its condemnation was the final, logical, step in this historical becoming. The country was now ready to start a new, blank, page of history in the European Union.

Given the virulent reactions it triggered, the condemnation of communism was not a simple symbolic act. In fact, it was a highly political gesture emerging from, and in turn shaping, highly contentious local struggles. It was not strictly about the past, but also about the present and the future.

This is the main focus of this chapter: to unravel the complex social forces in which the condemnation of Romanian communism unfolded. My investigation is structured in two parts. First, I discuss the formation of the condemnation commission by embedding it in a wider history of anti-communism while pointing out the concrete political context, both local and global, of its appearance. I show how this

condemnation commission unified various brands of anti-communism active in post-1989 Romania and subsequently subordinated it to a particular class project. By mobilizing a series of tropes of the American Cold War anti-communism, post-communist anti-communism reduced the communist experience to the act of dispossession of the propertied classes. This, in turn, enabled these segments to claim a privileged position in the post-communist society by constantly invoking the historical "crimes" of communism and their status as "victims" while pressing for quick neoliberal transformations of the state as a form of de-communization. The condemnation commission was the officialization and institutionalization of these hegemonic class claims shaping the transition period.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the report of this commission as a piece of autobiographical writing, which magnified trends already shaping the historiography of Romanian communism after 1989.[1] This autobiographical focus in turn engenders a specific hybrid formation that I call *history-as-memory*: a process in which the historical investigation and its modes of presentations have the form and structure of memory. But while this is certainly a defining feature of anti-communist historiography, I also show it is in fact rooted in wider trends of history writing specific to the prevalent belief in the "end of history" in which the past is strictly linked with autobiographical experience and memory and as such available only to an initiated few. In this mode, the past ceases to be a subject of scientific investigation and instead becomes a matter of invocation and divination.

I. The Making of the Condemnation Commission

Theoretical Overture: Historiography of Historiography

The immediate question that arises here is precisely that of how to write the history of the commission and of its report. How to write the history of a historical account? This question poses with great acuity one of the recurrent themes of this dissertation: the tension between history and its discursive representation: historiography. What I have in mind here is not just the standard Foucauldian criticism of the quest for "origins" and their subsequent presentation in the form of a coherent, linear narrative. Rather, I seek to point out the danger of replacing a teleological construction about the making of the commission (that registered in official documents and in the archives) with another one (my own).

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[1] A series of academic studies have engaged with this report already. See for example Ruxandra Cesereanu, The final report on the Holocaust and the final report on the communist dictatorship in Romania, *East European Politics and Societies*, 22 (2): 270-281, 2008; Monica Ciobanu, Criminalising the past and reconstructing collective memory. The Romanian truth commission. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61 (2): 313-336, 2009; Charles King, Remembering Romanian Communism, *Slavic Review* 66 (4): 718-723; 2007; C. Tileagă, What is a 'revolution'?: National commemoration, collective memory and managing authenticity in the representation of a political event, *Discourse & Society* 19(3): 359-382, 2008. As it will become apparent in this chapter, my reading is different on two levels: first, far from simply cherishing the report as a form of effecting transitional justice, I seek to embed it in the wider anti-communist ideology of the transition; second, instead of celebrating the report as an exceptional, unprecedented form of scholarship, I try to place it within the local and global historical scholarship of communism and its underlining class and ideological presuppositions. For another critical perspective, see Natalia Buier, *Officializing the Past. An analysis of the presidential commission for the analysis of the communist dictatorship in Romania*, Central European University, unpublished MA thesis, 2007.

Michael Trouillot noted that historiography is simply the synthesis of a dialectical process of mentioning and silences, punctuating it at every stage of its making: the making of sources, the retrieval of sources, the writing of the narrative, etc.[2] The analytic task would be then to grasp the motions of this process. However, such an undertaking would itself be constituted by its own series of mentioning and silences, without suspending their dialectical embrace. How to overcome this impasse then? How to avoid both the positivistic utopian trap of a total, definitive representation of reality in which nothing is presumably left out or silenced *and* the trap of a simple political game in which the silences of a historical account are voiced by another one, in turn constituted by its own silences?

A way out of this conundrum is to remember that every historical account is also an abstraction: a break in the sequence of events produced by theoretical work; a spatialization of time into discourse.[3] Consequently, every historical account, more than a dialectics of mentioning and silences, is shaped by the constant interplay of continuities and discontinuities. Surely, every historical account aims at acquiring a logical structure, a cohesive narrative that explains (and justifies) the becoming of what it purports to describe. But precisely as such, every historical account is formed at the intersection of various continuities and breaks; it must construct its own "genealogy".[4]

To complicate things once more, a historiographical account is always double: an account about something (its topic) and an account about itself: its formation and appearance inherent in its construction. Every history contains its own (imagined, constructed, etc., but precisely for the same reasons, very real) history of making. Instead of simply offering a competing history, or rather a counter-history, I will present the history of the presidential commission against the background of its (shifting) continuities and discontinuities, of its claimed, disclaimed and unclaimed genealogies and its disavowed internal and external contradictions. I re-embed the history of the commission into the wider history of its making from which it was abstracted in the form of a recognizable and iterable ideological historical narrative.

In so doing, the analysis ceases to be strictly connected to the commission and its report, and instead engages a wider socio-political space and a larger set of overlapping histories, genealogies and biographical trajectories. I emphasize this point in order to suggest that any claim to historiographical representation does not exist in a void, but is constituted within and (often) against an already pre-existing setting, shaped by unequal power and class relations. Since historiography results from a complex process of production, it is asymmetrical and shaped by inequalities, domination, exploitation and monopoly.[5] Any attempt to historicize the formation and functioning of this commission must face the unequal power exercised by the commission's own history, by its own mode of historical (re)-presentation. The present creates the past, which, in turn, is *present-ing* as natural, as logical, the present and its configuration. The notion of "causality" is also reconfigured here. Causality does not simply mean identifying a cause and its subsequent effects, but

[2] Michael Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History*, (Beacon Press, 1995).

[3] Michael Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

[4] John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Studies in the Ethnographic Imagination (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

[5] E. J. Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: New Press, 1997).

rather grasping the overall forces that created the conditions of possibility for something to emerge in the first place.[6]

Fractions of Anti-communism: Local and Global Class Projects

According to the official documents of the Romanian Presidency, the President appointed Vladimir Tismăneanu, a Romanian-born American scholar, based on his scholarly merits and academic recognition, to head the presidential commission, which was mandated to

> …elaborate a scientific synthesis regarding the crimes and abuses of the Romanian communist regime from its founding until the 1989 revolution. The Commission will analyze the main institutions that made possible the perpetuation of the communist dictatorship, serious violations of the human rights, and the role of some political figures in maintaining this regime.[7]

The role of the Final Report of this commission was to offer the Romanian President the scientific grounds for the condemnation of the communism as an "illegitimate and criminal regime".[8] As head of the commission, Vladimir Tismăneanu was solely in charge of selecting its members, its methodology, its manner of working and the structure of its final document. The Presidential Administration only offered a budget, of around EUR 100,000 as it turned out later, and a deadline: in time for the EU accession.[9]

While members of the anti-communist civil society cherished the decision of an official *condemnation* of communism – something they were hoping and petitioned for since 1989[10] –the idea of a condemnation *commission* was met with resistance, if not even distrust. For example, Andrei Pleşu, a prominent anti-communist public intellectual and for a short while a presidential advisor, dismissed it altogether. He argued that given the immense, solid, scholarship already available, coupled with the lived experiences and memories of people, such a commission would be simply a bureaucratic redundancy.[11]

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[6] Don Kalb and Herman Tak, *Critical Junctions : Anthropology and History Beyond the Cultural Turn* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

[7] Excerpt from the official communiqué of the Romanian Presidency, available on its website (www.presidency.ro), my translation.

[8] Ibid.

[9] The president of the commission and the core members worked pro bono; only the experts were remunerated for their contribution. However, in 2010 a series of news reports, based on official data from the Presidential administration, showed that the president of the commission was reimbursed with a total amount of 32.000 euros between 2006 and 2009, for undisclosed expenses: http://www.cotidianul.ro/131599-Tismaneanu-si-a-decontat-32000-euro-la-Administratia-Prezidentiala. Retrieved March 15, 2013

[10] There is a long history of attempts at official decommunization, starting with point 8 of the Timisoara proclamation during the days of the Romanian revolution. In the context of this condemnation commission, Sorin Ilieşiu later claimed that it was his petition that determined president Băsescu to call for a condemnation. However, one should not confuse here pretext with cause. For an overview of Romanian attempts at lustration, decommunization and transitional justice, see Lavinia Stan, *Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Romania : The Politics of Memory* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[11] For a good summary of all the controversies and positions involved vis-à-vis the establishment of the Tismaneanu commission I have to point to Vladimir Tismaneanu's Wikipedia page. More than a

Ironically, Vladimir Tismăneanu shared a similar view before his appointment. He too believed that there is already enough scholarship available for an immediate condemnation of the regime, pointing to his 2004 book, *Stalinism for all seasons*.[12] Furthermore, Tismăneanu considered that the role of such a commission would be perfunctory since the conclusions regarding communism are already known: that it was a murderous regime based on a murderous ideology implemented by the Secret Police and the structures of the Communist Party. In a further ironic twist, Tismăneanu considered that such commissions, given their size and manner of investigation, usually end up producing mammoth final documents that are read by very few.[13]

Nonetheless, the commission was formed under the presidency of Tismăneanu and the final membership included 18 core members and 20 experts; Cristian Vasile, a historian, had a dual role of both member and expert.[14] The final structure and membership of the commission reflected a conscious attempt to mitigate various anticommunist forces. In the end, the commission was a two-tier construction that neatly separated between members and experts. With the exception of Gail Klingman, a reputed international scholar, all members of the commission were part of *Grupul pentru Dialog Social* (GDS, see below) and as such enjoying a considerable amount of public notoriety and respect as anti-communist figures.

Out of the 18 members of the commission, only seven had pursued a scientific interest in the study of communism and only three of them were professional historians.[15] The task of the core members seems to have been that of offering moral and symbolic competence, while the experts, most of them historians and all of them specialized in a specific field of communist scholarship, offered the scholarly legitimation. What both tiers of the commission shared nonetheless was their explicit anti-communism, both moral and methodological.

But various frictions and confrontations marked the making of the commission. Initially, Nicolae Corneanu, metropolitan of Transylvania, and Sorin Antohi, a historian, were also invited by Tismăneanu to take part in the commission as members. However, both resigned following evidence of their collaboration with the former secret police, the Securitate. A similarly controversial episode shaping the making of the commission involved the figure of Paul Goma, one of the most prominent anti-communist Romanian dissidents. Initially Goma expressed his

simple entry, it covers extensively his entire career and work, especially various aspects regarding the condemnation commission, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Tism%C4%83neanu

[12] Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons : A Political History of Romanian Communism*, Societies and Culture in East-Central Europe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[13] See http://www.revista22.ro/condamnarea-comunismului-2137.html, retrieved March 15, 2013.

[14] The final structure of the Presidential Commission: president Vladimir Tismaneanu; members: Sorin Alexandrescu, Mihnea Berindei, Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu, Radu Filipescu, Virgil Ierunca, Sorin Ilieşiu, Gail Kligman, Monica Lovinescu, Nicolae Manolescu, Marius Oprea, H-R Patapievici, Dragoş Petrescu, Andrei Pippidi, Romulus Rusan, Levente Salat, Stelian Tănase, Cristian Vasile, Alexandru Zub; experts: Hannelore Baier, Ioana Boca, Stefano Bottoni, Ruxandra Cesăreanu, Radu Chiriţă, Adrian Cioflîncă, Dorin Dobrincu, Robert Furtos, Armand Goşu, Constantin Iordachi, Maria Mureşan, Germina Nagâţ, Eugen Negrici, Novak Csaba Zoltan, Olti Agoston, Cristina Petrescu, Anca Şincan, Virgil Tărău, Cristian Vasile, Smaranda Vultur.

[15] For a more detailed account, see Florin Abraham's piece in *Iluzia Anti-comunismului*.

acceptance to be part of the commission. But following a confrontation with Tismăneanu, he was dismissed. Goma contested Tismăneanu's credentials invoking his endorsement of the regime in the 1970s when he was a graduate student. Moreover, Goma also pointed out the significant role Tismăneanu's family had in establishing the communist regime in Romania. Moreover, Gabriel Liiceanu - also a prominent anti-communist intellectual - contested Tismăneanu's suitability for the job as well. For Liiceanu, Tismăneanu was questionable because during a book-length interview with the former president Ion Iliescu[16], he did not really confront Iliescu with his neo-communist past and actions. For Liiceanu this lapse was a form of complicity. While Goma retained his stance, Liiceanu later recanted his and published the final Report at his own publishing house, Humanitas.

What we encounter here is something more than the all too familiar practice of the transition of pointing the finger to one's shady moments in the past. Rather, it is a particular mechanism of creating the Other, of excluding people from the community of those who can have a legitimate claim to representing the past, to writing history. It is precisely at this point that biography and history meet: one has to be able to present first a story of the self that is suitable for engaging with the past. It is not only a matter of making claims over the past, but more importantly, it is a process that carves out the dialogical and logical space from which the past can be scrutinized. Consequently, the act of retrospection becomes synonymous with that of introspection, a form of claiming a consistent and legitimate subject position. From this perspective, the writing of history cannot be separated from the writing of one's self.[17] Every historiography is essentially also an autobiography and an exercise in subject constitution. Hence, every historiographical account necessarily presupposes the formulation of a moral universe that legitimizes, justifies and offers power to that account.

The final members of the condemnation commission shared an important common feature that remained largely unnoticed: the archives of the Romanian former secret police (the Securitate) deemed their biographies suitable for writing the report of condemning communism. Paradoxically then, the research of the Securitate archives *preceded* the constitution of the commission itself; as it were the commission called upon to judge communism was formed only after the very same regime (through its most fearful archive) indirectly passed its judgment on the commission's members. The commissioners were asked to judge a regime that already deemed them suitable for passing a judgment. Consequently, as the case of Sorin Antohi rendered clear, the biographical truth exposed by the Securitate archives prevailed over other criteria, such as his academic credentials, post-communist trajectory or the historical circumstances that led to his collaboration in the first place. Consequently, the final membership of the commission, far from evaluating and condemning communism, was itself the direct product of the former Securitate truth-regime which points to a highly problematic relationship with this archive inherent to Romanian anti-communism that I explore at length in Chapter 4.

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[16] Ion Iliescu, Vladimir Tismaneanu, and Liviu Bleoca, *The Great Shock at the End of a Short Century : Ion Iliescu in Dialogue with Vladimir Tismaneanu on Communism, Post-Communism and Democracy*, East European Monographs (Boulder: Social Science Monographs ; New York : distributed by Columbia University Press, 2004).
[17] I rely here on Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

Moreover, the difficulties encountered in setting up the commission also point toward already existing struggles and splits *within* the anti-communist camp itself. Hegemonic after 1989, the anti-communist camp was far from unitary and cohesive, but punctuated by its own rivalries and oppositions. Consequently, the binary imagine that opposes two coherent antagonistic societal forces –the progressive, reformist, anti-communist group that seeks to break with the past and, at the opposite end, the retrograde, neo-communist occult forces that simply want to preserve their privileges[18] - must be complicated by a view that emphasizes various levels of contradictions and historical dynamics.

Indicative of such pervasive divisions has been the long-lasting opposition between dissidents like aforementioned Paul Goma, who actively engaged in concrete actions against the regime and faced its punitive consequences, and anti-communist intellectuals like Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleşu, who made claims to a form of dissidence under communism called "*resistance through culture*". This refers to a practice of engaging in sophisticated, but private intellectual work, while publicly following the rules and regulations of the regime and taking part in the formal functioning of its institutions. In fact, the entire idea of "*resistance through culture*" was premised on the functioning of the state institutions, which allowed for such projects to exist in the first place, in the form of publishing houses, research institutes and scholarships. Consequently, in post-communism, Liiceanu, Pleşu and other similar voices premised their anti-communism not on concrete, direct, political *actions* against the former regime, but on maintaining an overall uncompromised symbolic and moral *stance* in relation to it.[19]

This tension between *dissident political actions* and *moral stance* was further complicated by the activity and subsequent claims of the anti-communist diaspora, credited with an active role in bringing down communism and as such expected to play an important part in post-communism.[20] In addition, due to their unquestionable moral stature –in part due to their externality from the everydayness of the communist regime – these figures frequently played the role of arbiters within the local anti-communist camp, endorsing certain figures as genuine anti-communists while expressing doubts about others' intentions and true allegiances.

The former political prisoners of communism –that is, the last remnants of the interwar bourgeois political class - made their own anti-communist claims. Aided by their former political status and marginality during communism they sought to participate directly in the formal political game after 1989 instead of simply making cultural claims. Therefore they revived the former interwar political parties, such as the National Liberal Party and the Agrarian Party. After a brief spell in power between 1996 and 2000, which ended in economic disaster, they became completely

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[18] M. Ciobanu, op. cit.

[19] For an analysis of this group and its activities prior to 1989 see Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*.

[20] I refer here to people like Mihnea Berindei, Monica Lovinescu, Virgil Ierunca and other figures associated with the anti-communist diaspora and/or the Radio Free Europe circles. Vladimir Tismaneanu is a hybrid, closer to Pleşu and Liiceanu before his emigration (in the sense of taking part in state institutions), and after 1981, closer to the diaspora circles. On the claims of the diaspora see Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, *Intelectualii ÎN CîMpul Puterii : Morfologii ŞI Traiectorii Sociale*, ColecţIa Plural M (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007).

marginalized in the subsequent political arrangements and largely played only the role of symbolic figures.

These various positions had been actively and visibly at play within *Grupul pentru Dialog Social* – an iconic institution of Romanian post-communist anti-communism. GDS emerged in the stormy days of the 1989 Revolution with the explicit purpose of bringing together various anti-communist forces in order to have a meaningful say during the transition.[21] Through its weekly press organ, *Revista 22*, and through meetings, debates and other public interventions, GDS elevated anti-communism to the ideology of transition. Its argument was that since the 1989 Revolution was stolen by the neo-communists, more than ever anti-communism was a valid stance seeking full de-communization and a genuine European commitment. While couched as a moral and cultural position, their anti-communism was in fact also a mechanism for making very concrete political and social demands. GDS as such never played a political role, but many of its members actively engaged in politics and held important public offices, first, between 1996-2000 and then after 2004, when the coalition led by the president Băsescu came to power.

The alliance between the presidential aspirations of Traian Băsescu and GDS interests was, at first glance, surprising and quite unexpected. After all, Băsescu was a high-ranking state bureaucrat prior to 1989 and at the time of his 2004 presidential bid he was the head of a party affiliated with the European Socialists - quite the opposite of GDS expectations. But local history and context are very important here and they largely explain the social origins of the condemnation of communism. A former member of the communist technical intelligentsia, Traian Băsescu was the head of a political coalition seeking to oust from power the local owners of capital, politically organized around the Social Democratic Party. This was largely considered to be the successor of the Romanian Communist Party. Prior to 2004, with the exception of the 1996-2000 cycle, the Social Democrats (under previous different names) had been in power for most of the transition period and from this capacity they presided over the privatization process of the former state assets to their favor, while also writing the first and second post-socialist constitutions to suit their own interests. This ensured an almost unshakable economic and political hegemony, especially since the party was also in charge of successfully brining to an end the negotiations for Romania's EU accession in 2003.

However, they were vulnerable on two levels. First, their social base that kept them in power after 1989 –that is, the former communist industrial proletariat and the poor peasants – quickly shrank, following the neoliberal reforms implemented after the 2000s with a view to EU integration. Under the new economic pressures, most of them were forced into migration and in addition began to see the local owners of capital not as their paternalistic protectors, but as their economic usurpers. At the same time, the relative economic growth recorded between 2000 and 2004 brought into being an emerging middle-class, working in the private service sector, for which the monopoly of the local owners of capital over the economy was considered a straightjacket and a hindrance for the entrance of global capital after the EU accession.

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[21] For a broader discussion see Mihai Dinu Gheorgiu, Mihaiţă Lupu, *Mobilitatea elitelor în România Secolului XX*, (Bucureşti, Editura Paralela 45, 2008).

This mounting social tension was quickly speculated by the central-right coalition led by Traian Băsescu, that simply promised unlimited neoliberal reforms aimed against the economic interests of the owners of capital. The promise of these reforms, however, came under the dual package of anti-communism and anti-corruption, both seen as necessary strategies to get rid of the "old communists". Of course, this was largely befitting the former technocratic class of communism (like Băsescu), since their education and social skills made them the natural allies of the global capital in the periphery. They could play a mediating, expert role, especially by occupying strategic state positions.[22]

Secondly, the local owners of capital lacked any form of symbolic legitimacy. Portrayed as neo-communists and corrupt they became the embodiment of the persistence of the past into the present and a hindrance for the future.[23] In a circular way, their economic and political hegemony ensured that anti-communism became a hegemonic cultural and ideological construction. Consequently, the anti-communism professed by the GDS members was also inseparable from neoliberal reforms, aimed against the local owners of capital. In fact, the two were inseparable for ensuring de-communization. Anti-corruption and anti-communism became the two main pillars of the political and ideological edifice seeking to put an end to the political hegemony of the local owners of capital. But, precisely through this double framing, they were never criticized as comprador capitalists but as corrupt communists. Real capitalism – western-style- was always placed into the future, a desired goal still to be attained.

This overlap enabled a historical alliance between the former communist technical intelligentsia and former dissidents, political prisoners and members of the diaspora that wanted to give political representation to their long standing anti-communism and were willing to legitimize this alliance through their moral stance and notoriety. A series of young intellectuals, academics and journalists joined these forces partly out of conviction, partly because they sensed the political, institutional and ideological benefits anti-communism could offer, especially in the hands of a coalition assuming political and state power.[24]

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[22] For a broader discussion of these dynamics see Vladimir Pasti, *Noul Capitalism RomâNesc*, ŞTiinŢE Politice Opus (Iaşi: Polirom, 2006).However, Pasti focuses too much on elites instead of social classes in order to properly grasp the class struggles prior and after 1989. Hence, he misses the centrality of anti-communism in these struggles.

[23] Daniel Barbu, *Republica Absentă : Politică ŞI Societate ÎN RomâNia Postcomunistă*, Editată a 2-a rev. şi adăugită. ed., Biblioteca De Politică (Bucureşti: Nemira, 2004).

[24] As it is always the case, there was an important subplot to the construction of this alliance, involving the president and the prime minister - former allies before 2004, but enemies afterwards. Both sought to capitalize on the political potential of anti-communism and thus tried to become the spearhead of this alliance. While the Prime-Minister made the first steps in this direction by founding a research institute of the communist past (in short, IICCMER) headed by historian Marius Oprea, it was the Presidential Commission that brought under a single umbrella the entire communist factions under the leadership of Tismaneanu and thus subordinated to the president. In the long run, after the condemnation, the temporary armistice gave way to more bitter struggles, magnifying previously existing factions and leading to a major split: between Tismăneanu and Marius Oprea and their respective camps, with the Păltiniş group –themselves impossible to subsume to any of them - acting as occasional arbiters. Their bone of contention was two-fold: one involved the proper way of researching communism (either ideological, or investigation of actual crimes); a second involved a staunch competition for the research institute mentioned above. Between 2009-12 Tismaneanu's camp was in power, after that, following regime change, Marius Oprea's camp took over.

The entire condemnation process and its subsequent report was nothing else but the official institutionalization of this alliance and its economic and political agenda prior to the EU accession, much to the ire of the local owners of capital and of their political faction reduced now to powerless gesticulations in the parliament. But, every criticism of this coalition (and of its neoliberal stance) after assuming power became in fact a sign of neo-communist sensibilities, which in turn reinforced the need for more anti-communism and pedagogy of memory. Anti-communism effectively rendered competing class projects as mere cultural difference in relation to the communist past and offered a dominant position to the anti-communist intellectuals and their political faction, who could claim a moral high ground in relation to it.

Daniel Barbu observed that both Romanian politicians and intellectuals owe their careers and public notoriety to the communist regime. Nonetheless, after 1989 they tried to obliterate this sociological and biographical aspect by emphasizing its so-called criminal character and outside imposition by the USSR.[25] In this context, it is perhaps useful to recall that, for example, in 1983, the Romanian Communist Party had the biggest number of members relative to the total of the active population in the communist bloc: 3,3 million members, or 14,6% of the active population.[26] According to Barbu, the restructuring of the society after 1989 did not emerge following competing alternative projects, but largely from battles between the communists and the anti-communists. Instead of aiming to formulate a wider project of global reform and societal change, the political and intellectual struggles took as their object the communist past of the political class. As such, Barbu noted, the intellectuals merely forced the politicians to explain their past, instead of pressuring them to outline the future. The focus on the past represented in fact a process of de-politicization and of popular disenfranchisement, allowing politics to become simply the outplay of various interests of the ruling class segments.

But these local processes were further amplified by European and global developments. On January 25, 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 1481 unambiguously entitled "*Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes*" based on a report by the Swedish Popular Party MP Goran Linblad.[27] This resolution placed the concepts of "class struggle" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" at the root of the totalitarian regimes that dominated central and eastern European countries. In addition, the resolution asked for the identification and punishment of the perpetrators of the communist crimes in a similar fashion to those accused of Holocaust. For the western Europeans, it offered the possibility to wed European fascism and communism together as two sides of the same totalitarian coin and subsequently to impose a unified symbolic regime of memory for the entire Europe. In this paradigm, everybody was a victim. Unity in sufferance at the expense of historical clarity and concrete investigation resonated well with the wider EU agenda of garnering popular support for the European project – at extremely low levels in early 2000s and later -

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[25] Barbu. Pp.: 17

[26] Barbu, op. cit., p. 58.

[27] Linblad drew his report on the basis of the (in)famous Black Book of Communism by Stephane Courtois. In 2008 Linblad was one of those who co-signed the Prague Declaration, a document that in essence called for the recognition of the similarity between the Nazi and the communist crimes and for a common analysis of the two as versions of totalitarianism. See the text of the Prague declaration here: http://praguedeclaration.org/, retrieved March 15, 2013.

through large cultural projects aimed to construct a European identity. Collective sufferance, and the boom of memorials and monuments that accompanied it, became one of EU's most important identity tropes –which, of course, gained a particularly ironic dimension during the prolonged economic crisis of the eurozone.

The memory project of the former communist countries was suited to accelerate the pace of EU culturalization practices, especially after the 2004 enlargement process when out of the new 11 members, 7 were former communist countries. For these countries, the suffering brought about by the communist experience could explain their backwardness but could also offer a powerful tool to make political and financial claims within the EU for assistance and reparation. Anti-communism became then also an identity device meant to compensate for the economic and political subordination of these countries within the EU.[28]

Yet, it was also empowering, since by invoking the anti-communist past, the former communist countries could pursue their own independent foreign policy agenda, most notably by supporting the US in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Staunch anti-communism coupled with a powerful conservative agenda became the trademark of what Donald Rumsfeld called the "New Europe". Once again, anti-communism played a very important political role, by effecting important re-alignments at the level of the transnational elites within and beyond EU. Romania subscribed to this agenda by condemning communism which enabled the local ruling class to be part of the "New Europe" and to directly link its interests with those of the Empire and transnational capital. Consequently, Romanian anti-communism fulfilled not only a horizontal role of achieving political and ideological hegemony for the former technocratic class in search of political power, but also a vertical one by enabling a direct junction with financial and geostrategic interests in the region.

Lineages of Anti-Communism

But there was already a powerful Cold War legacy of knotting together anti-communism and Empire. As Alain Badiou noted, post-communist anti-communism merely rehashes old arguments of the 1950s American anti-communism.[29] It seems then that the ideology of anti-communism does not have a direct connection with the experience of "actually existing socialism". It appears as an ideological assemblage that survived the end of the Cold War unchanged and was simply confirmed by the demise of the communist regimes. As such, it is not a form of historical investigation, but of ideological reproduction. It is important to stake out precisely the type of anti-communism the condemnation report put forward and sought to institutionalize. This aspect points to further structural tensions and personal sensibilities that the condemnation commission had to hone in order to build a powerful indictment of communism and impose a hegemonic understanding of the past.

In the case of GDR, Andreas Glaeser noted that the local dissidents he studied based their criticism of the regime on a powerful Russian and Central-Eastern European anti-communist tradition, parts of it leftist in origin.[30] Most of Glaeser's interlocutors were keen to point out their effort to stay away from the liberal and neoliberal

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[28] József Böröcz, Mahua Sarkar, What is the European Union, *International Sociology*, 20:22, 153-173, 2005.
[29] Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, (London: Verso, 2010), p. 2.
[30] Glaeser.p. 383

perspectives on communism. Their sources of inspiration included Wolfgang Leonhard, Czeslaw Milosz, Arthur Koestler, Milovan Djilas, Evgeniia Ginzburg, Nadejda Mandelstam, Alexander Soljenitsin, George Orwell, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, Nikolai Buharin, Ernest Mandel and Leszek Kolakowski. Surely, some of these names were incorporated into the western Cold War ideological machine –most notably Kolakowski and Soljenitsin – but nonetheless this tradition offered a sui generis rejection of the communist regime, one largely rooted in autobiographical experiences of hope and disenchantment and traversed by melancholic feelings and a sense of the absurd and futility. This version of anti-communism did not reject communism *per se*, especially its initial emancipatory ideal, but rather its particular articulation in the Central-Eastern European context. The dream of equality and liberation still permeated all these writings even though poignantly marked by a deep melancholia for their unbridgeable distance into the future. This tradition was largely more intellectual and less academic and focused on personal trajectories and dramas then on political systems as such.

The Romanian case is significantly different. For people associated with Păltiniş, together with the philosophical readings that explored the peaks of the Western philosophical canon, the usual philosophical readings included John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Hayek, Allan Bloom, Leo Strauss, Karl Popper, Alexis de Tocqueville and Edmund Burke –that is, the classical canon of the western liberal-conservative tradition.[31] For people like Andrei Pleşu, their intellectual sources also included religious readings, which could be interpreted as provocations towards a regime that was considered atheist.[32] Contrary to their Central and Eastern European peers, the Romanian intellectuals did embrace western liberal and neoliberal criticisms of the regime and were less interested or able to develop their own anti-communism, based on local, lived social realities. This is also evident in the type of anti-communist literature that they read. Authors such as Raymond Aron, Francois Furet, Alain Besancon, J Francois Revel, A. Finkelkraut constitute up to today the most important references for the Romanian anti-communism. One explanation for this seduction is both the accessibility offered by mastering the French language –the predominant language of intellectual formation and its indelible mark – and the nature of these writings, essayistic and philosophical in style.

But at the same time I believe there is more to it. Specific to the French tradition is its depiction of communism as springing from the French revolution, the Bolsheviks being just the 20th century incarnation of the Jacobins in the backward environment of Eastern Europe.[33] Communism –in all its brutality and murderous character- is just one of the evils inherently present in the western modernity inaugurated by the fall of the Bastille. Consequently, the fall of the Berlin wall represented the end point of this maddening journey. This perspective, in turn, augmented the anti-modernist and

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[31] Good sources for what the Romanian intellectual engaged in resistance through culture read are Gabriel Liiceanu, *The PăLtiniş Diary : A Paideic Model in Humanist Culture*, English ed., Central European Library of Ideas (Budapest ; New York: CEU Press, 2000). Andrei Pleşu, *Jurnalul De La Tescani*, Toph (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2003). H. R. Patapievici, *Flying against the Arrow : An Intellectual in Ceausescu's Romania*, Central European Library of Ideas, (Budapest, Hungary ; New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

[32] Pleşu.

[33] François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion : The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

conservative sensibilities of the Romanian intellectuals, which had its own genealogy in the interwar writing of the fascist philosopher Mircea Eliade, that longed for a return to a pre-modern world structured around religious values and hereditary privileges in which the sages, just like the priests, had a prominent position in the vicinity of power.[34]

This brand of anti-communism resonated well with pre-established intellectual sensibilities and modes of intellectual formation and creation. What is more, by condemning communism as a failure *ab initio*, it made unnecessary the need to properly examine the actually existing regimes. There was no need for sociology –the science of modernity par excellence - but an escape towards philosophy. The phenomenal success of Heideggerian philosophy both before and after 1989 in the local intellectual context is part and parcel of this temptation to escape the modern world into a pristine past of Being. Communism was the ultimate embodiment of the madness of modernity and the only possible stance in relation to it was a moral and philosophical rejection, not a practical engagement with it.[35]

This anti-communist perspective became quickly dominant also after 1989 given the immense prestige and public stature of its proponents, the former Păltiniş members, now having central positions at GDS. Given its anti-modern, conservative character it could easily accommodate more radical stances too, especially the fascist anti-communism of some of the former political prisoners or of the religious right. But at the same time this was not the anti-communism Vladimir Tismăneanu professed.

Before leaving Romania, Tismăneanu was hardly an anti-communist. As a sociology graduate he was versed in Georg Lukacs, Theodor Adorno and Leszek Kolakowski. He was trying to mobilize neo-Marxism and the post-68 Western New Left against the dogmas of the Ceauşescu regime. Had he stayed, he had all the qualifications to become a Marxist dissident of the regime, a true reformer. But coming from a politically marginalized family he encountered difficulties in landing a job as a sociology researcher, which prompted his emigration to USA via Paris and Caracas. As a young Eastern European émigré in mid-1980s United States, Vladimir Tismăneanu arrived at the high-point of Reagan's policy and its brand of neoconservative anti-communism. This intellectual legacy deserves a brief mentioning since its relevant also for the Romanian anti-communist sensibilities after 1989.

Trotsky's 1936 criticism of Stalinism was particularly inspiring for large parts of the American left. By emphasizing the bureaucratically totalitarian nature of this regime, Trotsky was in fact cautioning against the perils of assuming state power by pointing out how the revolution was confiscated by a handful of bureaucrats to their own benefit at the expense of the workers'.[36] This criticism of Stalinism proved particularly formative for the so-called "New York intellectuals", as the group that

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[34] Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco : L'oubli Du Fascisme : Trois Intellectuels Roumains Dans La Tourmente Du SièCle*, 1re éd. ed., Perspectives Critiques (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002).

[35] H. R. Patapievici, *Omul Recent : O Critică a ModernităŢIi Din Perspectiva ÎNtrebăRii Ce Se Pierde Atunci CîNd Ceva Se CîŞTigă?,'* Ed. a II-a rev. ed. (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2001). H. R. Patapievici, *Politice*, Ed. a 3-a. ed., Toph (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2002).

[36] Trotsky and Eastman.

formed the influential Partisan Review was known, with Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Norman Podhoretz but also Hannah Arendt as the most representative figures.[37] In their youths they resonated well with Trotsky's criticisms of Stalinism but also with his personality: an educated Jew versed in high literature and arts and a man of the world. This was a typically lower to middle class movement that embraced Marxism for its cultural and ideological critical virtues but emptied of its revolutionary kernel. By confining their Marxism to cultural analyses (like Lionel Trilling) and generally adopting an elitist left-wing cultural stance deprived of any political relevance, the group was impotent to the arguments of the McCarthy era. In addition, Hannah Arendt's theory about the "origins of totalitarianism", that made communism and Nazism kin enemies of liberalism and freedom, not only diverged significantly from the leftist roots of Trotsky's analysis but also introduced a distinct conservative moral perspective in historical analysis.

The tipping point for the group's rising conservatism was the Vietnam debacle. For their Trotskyite sensibilities the war was deemed necessary in order to halt the expansion of the USSR and its old Stalinist ambitions. Instead, under the liberal pressure exerted by the 1968 movements, the US according to these intellectuals was erroneously forced to retreat. The occasion to give political substance to these intellectual concerns was offered by Ronald Regan's presidency. Influenced by the neoconservatives (as Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz and Daniel Bell among others were now labeled)[38], the US foreign policy moved towards a more belligerent line encapsulated by Reagan famous phrase describing the USSR as "the evil empire". This political stance was motivated in part by the belief in American exceptionalism that had a moral duty to fight the evil across the world -an idea largely impressed upon the neoconservatives by the writings of Leo Strauss - but also by the acknowledgment that liberalism has failed and needed to be replaced. Therefore, social conservatism and economic neoliberalism became the two main pillars of neoconservatism coupled with an aggressive and interventionist foreign policy, especially against the USSR and its sphere of domination. In a roundabout way, the deep-seated Trotskyite hate against the Stalinist USSR was possible to enact some 50 years later during Reagan from opposite ideological positions.

The collapse of the communist regimes retrospectively elevated Reagan's foreign policy to the level of direct causal explanation and legitimized the moral anti-communism promoted by the neoconservatives. In a nutshell, this brand of anti-communism pays disproportionate attention to ideology, propaganda, political elites and institutions, and has little or nothing to say about socio-economic aspects. Moreover, it presupposes that history is made by exceptional elites, endowed with special powers and knowledge while the rest of the society is relegated to the level of amorphous masses that simply bear the effects of elites' actions. This is why academics informed by this approach tend to focus largely on the political elites of the former communist countries and their political acts. This is also a history centered on notable dates and events, symbolic in nature and endowed with special significance in

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[37] Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals : The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).
[38] Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism : The Autobiography of an Idea*, 1st Elephant Paperback ed. (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999).

shaping the course of history. No wonder this paradigm elevated 1989 to the level of a shattering event in human history, leading to the "end of history" itself.[39]

With a first-hand experience of the communist regime that he left behind, Tismăneanu quickly became the expert on Romanian matters, asked to write policy and research reports usable not only for scientific purposes but also for Cold War aims.[40] As such, by being in the thick of it, Tismăneanu had to adapt to the new ideology and to its presuppositions, which completely broke with his training acquired previously in Romania. Moreover, the opportunity to attack Ceauşescu's regime that forced his emigration through such powerful and prestigious institutions like Radio Free Europe and Voice of America was also highly appealing and further contributed to the embracing of this American brand of anti-communism *tout couer*.

The neoconservative anti-communism significantly shaped Tismăneanu's type of anti-communism, infusing all his books and analyses, and later also the presuppositions and content of the condemnation report.[41] This also became one of the dominant forms of anti-communism after 1989, especially for those willing to study the communist regime in academic settings linked with conservative American institutions. This influence was in fact acknowledged by Tismăneanu, who together with his friends and disciples introduced the neoconservative thinking to the Romanian public in a series of intellectual publications and debates prior to and after the publication of the condemnation report.[42]

While at times there might have been certain minor frictions within Romanian post-communist anti-communism springing from these traditions, in fact the distribution of anti-communist sensibilities and historical pathways of socialization functioned in practice like a division of labor, especially within GDS: the anti-communist intellectuals (like Pleşu and Liiceanu) mobilized the French tradition and partly that of Central Eastern Europe recuperated after 1989, while Vladimir Tismăneanu and his younger followers, while not stranger to them either, invoked more the US anti-communist tradition and the academic legitimation that came with it. The two-tier structure of the commission (members and experts) further reflected this division of labor and the symbolic hierarchies of status and competences inherent to it.

While both these forms of anti-communism share a similar (neo)conservative core, they diverge nonetheless at the level of practical historical investigation. In the French version, there is no real need for research. It is a priori subordinated to the philosophical stance that condemns communism as an evil of modernity. As such, investigation in relation to it takes the form of philosophical musings or autobiographical explorations. It is indicative that most of the Romanian anti-communist intellectuals and dissidents produced autobiographical writings about their

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[39] Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, Rewriting Histories (London ; New York: Routledge, 1999).
[40] For a detailed analysis of this point, see Mircea Platon here: http://convorbiri-literare.dntis.ro/PLATONaug12.htm. Accessed March 15, 2013.
[41] A good example for this is his book, *Stalinism for all seasons*, entirely based on tropes of neoconservative history writing.
[42] Illustrative for this link is Tismăneanu's preface to the Romanian edition of his *Stalinism for all seasons* where he explicitly defends Bush's war on terror as similar to the previous fight against communism, thus mobilizing another important neoconservative trope.

experiences during communism, espousing the foundations thinking: communism is a regime, a system that seeks to destroy and annihilate the individual. The only proper response to it is a personal testimony.

In the American version of anti-communism, communism is primarily an evil ideology and not necessarily a philosophical stance or a particular regime. As such, it needs to be debunked, proved wrong and inconsistent. Moreover, the proper political answer to it is to organize an ideological counter-hegemony, centered on the consensus of the superiority of western (American) democracy and its underlining values. In this strategy, historical investigation is important in order to point out the crimes and suffering of communism. It is basically a black book of killings.[43] Since for the neoconservative sensibilities history is made by the elites, historical investigation presupposes also the research of the communist leaders' biographies and their ideas. As the work of Vladimir Tismăneanu renders clear, it is a form of psycho-historical biographical investigation, linking biographical events with the development of ideas and political actions.[44] The focus of this anti-communism is entirely biographical, substituting structural relations with personal ones, to the extent that every regime becomes personalized. The overlap between these two versions of anti-communist scholarship significantly shaped the final structure and content of the condemnation report, which I discuss below.

Boris Buden rightfully noted that since post-communist anti-communism emerges and produces effects in a social space from which communism is effectively missing, it is a form of subjectivation.[45] This subjectivation comes in the form of a fetishistic disavowal: that is, both a recognition and a denial of communism as an integral part of western modernity – the very definition of castration in the original Freudian sense. In post-communist anti-communism there is no real room for the traumatic experience of historically embedded communism. Communism appears as an impossibility, a born failure, something that never actually worked.

What if then, asks Buden, the precise function of post-communist anti-communism is to make us forget the real traumatic fact: that communism did actually work, that it did function?[46] Or, to put differently, anti-communism does indeed recognize the traumatic event of communism, the radical questions it posed to the western modernity, but immediately tries to deny it, to obliterate and "forget" it by pretending that communism never happened, that it was already something at fault with modernity itself. In so doing, anti-communism necessarily "forgets" the history of all those people for whom communism, in one way or another, did work, did fulfill its promises, at least to some limited extent. The fact that anti-communism recognizes the traumatic event of communism is evident in the fascination it generated after its fall: the vast literature that constantly tries to point out the horrors of communism.

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[43] For a recent example of this basic point, see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands : Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
[44] From this perspective one can trace the deeply conservative core of Glaeser's understanding of how understandings are validated: particular experiences lead to particular ideas and actions. This basically denies the possibility for people to develop ideas against their own experiences and against particular contingent situation, that is, to experience breaks or illumination, or to put it in Badiou's terms, events.
[45] Buden, op. cit.
[46] This is best encapsulated by Furet's description that communism was an illusion, a chimera, a deceptive dream.

But unsurprisingly, the "victims" are usually members of the former bourgeoisies and propertied classes. The "masses", the peasants, the industrial classes never feature in such stories, except peripherally and without agency, simply because they are the necessary reminder of the forces of the masses that took history by storm in 1789.

Law Instead of Justice

By acknowledging this implicit ideological level of anti-communism that was put forward by the condemnation commission, it is also important to briefly examine its pretense of effecting transitional justice, of being a Truth Commission. For, in May 2010 at a talk organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Budapest, Vladimir Tismăneanu suddenly proposed a different history of the commission and of its report than the one he was presenting before. The condemnation of communism ceased to be the political act of the President, but the outcome of a process of civil mobilization demanding a coming to terms with the communist past. In this perspective, according to Tismăneanu, the condemnation commission was nothing else than a "truth commission" about communism, similar to other commissions in South Africa or Chile for example. After all, they all share similar formal features: a mandate, membership and the responsibility of "naming names".[47]

The quest for transitional justice and for lustration mechanisms characterized all countries of the former communist bloc.[48] These attempts bring up several related questions. How to establish and punish communist crimes? Is it possible to have a process of communism as a system or only of particular actors responsible for their excesses? What is performing justice in this case, when communism proclaimed itself to be fighting against injustice? Moreover, speaking about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, Achille Membe observed that this kind of commission, at a more philosophical level, brings up the questions: who is my Neighbor, who can I trust after post-communism and ultimately, what is truth and justice in this context?[49]

It is unclear what this shift in the genealogy of the Romanian condemnation commission suggested by its president was supposed to achieve. As Daniel Barbu noted, the condemnation commission and its report had no real legal power.[50] The mandate of the commission was to produce a scientific paper not a juridical act. Not even the President's speech in the Parliament could produce juridical effects since it is only the Parliament that can adopt such acts, and only when meeting a specific quorum. Thus, the justice established by the report was only symbolical, not actual.

What we encounter in fact in the pretense to transitional justice is the confusion of the ethical, judicial and theological categories. As Giorgio Agamben pointed out: "*law is not directed towards the establishment of justice, nor to the establishment of truth. Law is directed solely toward judgment, independent of justice and truth… The ultimate aim of law is the production of res judecata*"[51]. The idea of transitional justice is premised upon the confusion between law and justice: the idea that a

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[47] Oral communication at ICR Budapest, May 2010.
[48] Stan, op. cit.
[49] Oral communication, seminar at City University of New York, September 2011.
[50] Daniel Barbu, in *Iluzia.*
[51] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz : The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999). pp, 18.

lustration law imposed from above, or a condemnation, will automatically offer justice. In fact, they only prolong the punitive logic of the state and with it a different form of injustice by deeming guilty specific categories of people and not individuals – a violation of the very liberal principle on which transitional justice is claimed.

Already in Kafka, law appears only in the form of the trial. Similarly, in post-communism law seems to appear only at the end of a trial of communism. But if the essence of law is the trial, if right is only tribunal right, then execution and transgression, innocence and guilt, obedience and disobedience all become indistinct and lose their specificity. The ultimate end of juridical regulation is to produce the judgment, just like the purpose of the condemnation commission is to produce the report: that is, to pass a judgment. But producing a judgment entails not being interested in truth, in reparation or in reconciliation. As Adam Michnik put it, to forgive is precisely to give up the justice one considers himself/herself entitled to – a more difficult task than acting as judge and executioner for the guilty Other. Hence, a commission that passes a judgment, a sentence, cannot be a truth and reconciliation commission; it only plays the role of a tribunal. But as Agamben observed, this self-referential nature of passing a judgment entails that punishment does not follow from the judgment, but judgment is in itself *the* punishment. This is evident in the structural nature of the condemnation report: the historical facts about communism necessarily lead to its condemnation.

II. The Report as Autobiography

Theoretical Overture: How to Read a Text

Fredric Jameson wrote that we never really confront a text immediately as a thing-in-itself. Rather, we engage texts in a mediated form through various layers of previous interpretations, and through previous reading habits and categories developed in various interpretative traditions.[52] As such, reading and interpretation are, consciously or unconsciously, always-already political.

Mihail Bakhtin showed that a cultural product is not an isolated, self-contained piece, but its meaning emerges from the wider social and ideological coordinates in which it appears.[53] A cultural product enters into "*an ideological conversation at a grand scale*" with other cultural products. Furthermore, every cultural product, apart from its content, enters into a dialogue with the wider ideological rules (explicit and implicit) that govern that particular cultural space in terms of what can be said, how and by whom. This connection distinctly shows how power materializes into discourse, drawing the boundaries of inclusions and exclusions, of voices and silences.

Alexei Yurchak analyzed how for Bakhtin the authoritative discourse of a given social space is formed around a strict idea, or "dogma". It occupies a central place and is highly indifferent to other discourses with which it coexists, preceding them. Furthermore, because of its particular encoding, the authoritative discourse cannot be changed by exogenous discursive forces. All other discourses organize around the

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[52]Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious : Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981)., pp. 9
[53] M. M. Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

authoritative one, either by praising it, by quoting it, by interpreting it, or by applying it, but they cannot interfere with its code and alter it. The authoritative discourse is perceived then as immutable and beyond questioning, irrespective of its successful persuasion of its authors and publics.[54]

Claude Lefort pointed out the contradiction between the ideological enunciation (the level of theoretical ideas) and the ideological rule (the power of authority) governing the functioning of ideology in modernity.[55] For Lefort, the point of tension lies in the fact that the ideological rule has to remain outside of the ideological enunciation; as it were the power of authority has to remain invisible, outside of the realm of theoretical ideas. Put differently, in order to fulfill its political purposes of reproducing power, the ideological discourse must claim it presents an objective truth existing outside of it. But being outside of it, the ideological discourse lacks the means to describe this objective truth in its totality, which ultimately can jeopardize the pretense to universality. Lefort argues that this inherent lack in any modern ideology is supplemented by the figure of the "Master" who at the very same time is standing outside the ideological discourse, while possessing the knowledge of the objective truth.

In the case of Romanian anti-communism, the authoritative discourse of post-communism historiography, the figure of the Master that sutured the ideological gap was Vladimir Tismăneanu: as an American scholar he is outside of the Romanian anti-communist ideological field, but possesses the knowledge of the "objective truth" of communism through his academic status. Thus, Tismăneanu, as a Master-figure of the authoritative discourse of anti-communism allowed the truth about communism to "appear through himself". The condemnation report was precisely the materialization of this figure of the Master. The report far from being only a political act serving particular partisan class and ideological interests (as discussed in the first section of this chapter) also played the role of bringing together the ideological enunciation and the ideological rule of the anti-communist discourse. With the report, the ideological enunciation and the objective truth became one, properly inscribing this particular ideological constellation as universal. The report is not simply a text, a work of historiography, but the very embodiment of History, the moment when the truth about communism becomes manifest. As such, every reading is not only a political act (as suggested by Jameson) but also a religious experience as I suggest below.

The Structure of the Report
The final Report, almost 700 pages in its final version, is unambiguous in its conclusions: the Romanian communist regime was imposed from outside in 1947 by an USSR-led invasion. Consequently, it was illegitimate, criminal and anti-national. The report also estimates the number of victims, depicts the surveillance mechanisms and the institutionalized oppression orchestrated by the Communist Party. In addition, it identifies the main culprits, predictably the top echelon of the Party leadership, the secret police and, of course the ideology of communism. To these culpable figures, the Report opposes those of the dissidents who, in various ways, resisted the regime. International institutions like Radio Free Europe and Voice of America are also praised for their role in correctly informing the Romanian population and countering

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[54] Yurchak., pp. 15
[55] Claude Lefort and John B. Thompson, *The Political Forms of Modern Society : Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, 1st MIT Press ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

the official lies, but also for actively sustaining the activities of the dissidents. The conclusions of the report offer a series of recommendations such as building a monument for the victims of the communist repression and organizing a museum of the dictatorship experience; legal penalties for the public denial of the communist crimes and for the donning of communist symbols; complete access to the archives of the former regime and the institutionalization of the findings of the report for the education of the younger generations in the form of a high-school manual; the creation of a public institute in charge of researching the past and guarding the memory of the communist dictatorship.[56]

But the text reads in fact like a postmodern novel: a mixture between a historical fresco and a pulp spy story. It has the structure of a historical fresco because it aims to cover not only the entire Romanian Cold War experiences, but also to condemn communism once and for all. The pulp story elements are interspersed in this narrative, the reader being informed about communist love affairs, intimate plots and small details from the lives of notable leaders. This structure is also determined by the fact that the text of the report is not a unitary document but it was simply patched together from previous writings of the members and experts of the commission. This gives the text the consistency of a postmodern literary collage, written by many hands and incorporating a series of auctorial voices and perspectives. Its heterogeneous nature is best discernable at the level of style. The text of the report constantly mixes sober historical investigations with passionate diatribes against the communist regime, factual presentations with speculations, narrations of past events with counterfactual suppositions, objective tone with subjective voice.

Moreover, at the level of sources, things are equally mixed. The report cites both official archival documents and statistical data, but also novels, pieces of diary, colloquial conversations or personal recollections. This confers the text a dizzying structural and visual diversity: some segments of the text are punctuated by minute footnotes while others are just long essayistic musings.

Inevitably, this mode of presentation and of writing leads to a series of factual inaccuracies and contradictions. For example, the number of victims of the communist regime varies from half a million to two million across the text. Similarly, it is not clear if Ceaușescu did indeed pursue an independent policy against Moscow, and Romania has to be analyzed as a special case within the former bloc, or it was just a simple trick of the dictator while he was in fact blindingly following the rules of the Soviets. In various parts of the text the report presents both versions as correct, without offering an explanation of this obvious contradiction. Furthermore, the excessive use of metaphors and symbolic language to describe the crimes of communism leads to a series of conceptual problems. For example, the report deplores the "communist genocide" in Romania. Without properly specifying this term, its casual usage reminds of a common trope of revisionist historiography.[57] Also, as another fitting example, the report mentions the "tsunami" that hit the Romanian literature in the 1950s, which then led to the collapse of the entire cultural

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[56] Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România. et al., *Raport Final* (București: Humanitas, 2007).
[57] See for example Ernst Nolte's arguments here in this debate François Furet and Ernst Nolte, *Fascism and Communism*, European Horizons (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

edifice of the country. This refers to the banning of some fascist books and the purging of state libraries of works utterly inimical to the regime after 1947.[58]

It is obvious from these selected examples that the composite structure of the report was not necessarily designed to offer a dispassionate description of the communist regime, but to impress an idea upon the reader through the extensive use of metaphors, inflammable language and denunciatory procedures. To use J.L. Austin's distinction, conceptually its function was not constative but performative: its role was not to communicate something about the communist regime, but to raise passions in relation to it, to generate feelings, emotions and reactions −in short, to produce an effect about the communist past.[59]

Theoretically, the report is structured on the conservative dichotomy that opposes the ruling elites with their network of spies to the passive masses with only a handful of dissidents trying to oppose or resist the dictatorship. This schematic social ontology of communism is premised upon a similarly schematic vision of temporal flow and action, emphasizing key political events about key personalities in a teleological construction that inevitably culminates with the 1989 collapse. The hindsight knowledge of the collapse is what enables a moral evaluation of the past in terms of good and evil and subsequently allows for the abstraction of events and actions from their particular historical context.

Anti-communist Historiography and Autobiography

How does then the report relate to the field of historiography produced after 1989? Smaranda Vultur, a Romanian historian and an expert in the commission, noted that in the immediate period following the fall of the Romanian communism, the literati and the humanist intellectuals were the ones most involved in producing historical investigations and historical narratives about the defunct regime.[60] They considered themselves entitled to do so because of their relative marginalization in the official field of cultural production during communism and, for some, (like the members of the Păltiniş group) due to their "*resistance through culture*". They penned down their version of the past, one in which they were also the main actors. Their monopoly over the production of historical narratives about communism remained largely unchallenged for more than a decade. Especially for professional historians, the stigma of having participated in the nationalist frenzy of communism relegated them to some minor position in the post-communist public space or to outright silence.[61]

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[58] For a more balanced perspective, though still within the horizon of anti-communism, see Liliana Corobca, Procesul de epurare a cărților, in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, and Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România., *Stat ȘI Viață Privată ÎN Regimurile Comuniste* (Iași: Polirom, 2009).

[59] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2d ed., The William James Lectures (Oxford Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1975).

[60] Smaranda Vultur, New topics, new tendencies and new generations of historians in Romanian historiography, in U. Brunnbauer (ed.),(*Re)Writing History –*
Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism, (Münster, Lit Verlag Query, 2004).

[61] According to Irina Livezeanu who makes the same point, there were hierarchies within the historical profession as well: the more historians dealt with the modern and contemporary epoch, the more they were prone to speak the language of the party. Historians dealing with the middle ages or early modern times managed to protect their reputation and have a voice after 1989. Incidentally, these were the areas in which some form of materialist understandings and even class-based Marxist analyses survived. Ancient history and archeology were also problematic, since the regime used these findings in order to claim the ancient origin of the Romanians and thus make territorial claims over the Slaves

Consequently, the anti-communist faction of literati and humanists, writing the history in post-communism from their vantage point, and to their advantage, managed to set up the frames for historical investigation of the communist past.

Anti-communism, as a moral and theoretical perspective, became dominant in historiography. Florin Abraham, who investigated this phenomenon at length, concluded that the anti-communist ideology pre-determines the results of the historical research, while influencing the historian's choice of themes and methods of investigation. [62] To put it differently, the mainstream historical research of communism after 1989 *begins* from the conclusion that communism was an evil regime and the subsequent research has the role of only to reinforce this idea through illustrative examples. This is the structure of the condemnation report itself: its premise was to demonstrate that the communist regime was illegitimate and criminal and to mount evidence for its condemnation. This type of historiography seeks to emphasize the anti-democratic, repressive and criminal nature of the regime, at the expense of other social aspects, such as industrialization, urbanization or economic relations. The ideological matrix of anti-communism acquires then a pre-discursive function, the political unconscious level that pre-determines the topics, methods, style and findings of the research. But as Abraham notes, this type of research necessarily raises the problem of historical guilt and responsibility, abstracting the historical investigation from the terrain of social forces to that of morality.

This type of historiography is fully embedded in what Hayden White called "doctrinal realism" – that is, the 19th century legacy of Leopold von Ranke's historiography with its focus on evidence, description, archival knowledge and the belief that the historian can and must retell the "history as it happened".[63] In this mode, the historian simply translates the archive into moving narratives, dramatizing the past for the reader. But this is not solely specific to post-communist historiography. In fact, as Gary Wilder noted, it is specific to a contemporary turn in historiography more generally.[64] An eloquent example in this sense is Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*, which not only brings back to life the controversial revisionist arguments of Ernst Nolte about Nazism being a defensive reaction to Jewish-inspired Communism, but also premises

(the Russians) and the Hungarians. For an ampler discussion of nationalist historiography, see Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*. Also, for good discussions and analyses about the avatars of Romanian historiography under communism and after 1989, see Constantiniu. Apostol Stan, *Istorie ŞI Politică ÎN RomâNia Comunistă*, Istoria Timpului Prezent (Bucureşti: Curtea Veche, 2010). Georgescu and Popa. Bogdan Murgescu, *A Fi Istoric ÎN Anul 2000*, EsenţIall (Bucureşti: All Educaţional, 2000). While these texts are revealing in terms of facts, data and historical anecdotes, they all share two weaknesses. First, they make no effort at conceptualizing the position of the historian and the act of history writing as a practice of producing knowledge embedded not only in a particular field but also in a political context. Second, and interrelated, all employ methodological anti-communism. While Constantiniu's and Apostol's pieces are explicitly autobiographical, they only take the post-1989 view, infused with anti-communism and a complete disdain for the past regime in which they, nonetheless, made a career.

[62] Florin Abraham, Influenţa anticomunismului asupra istoriografiei române recente, în *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, nr. 3-4/2008, Bucureşti, INST, p.108-129 (ISSN 1221-6917)

[63] Hayden White, Introduction, in Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History : On the Poetics of Knowledge* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[64] Gary Wilder, From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographic Turns, AHR Forum on "Historiographic "Turns" in Critical Perspective, unpublished paper at the time of this writing.

the entire historical research on the virtues of making the archives speak for themselves.[65]

This ideological and methodological anti-communism of the post-1989 historiography is further reinforced by the methodological nationalism inherent to it.[66] Surely, this is hardly surprising since this was the defining feature of Romanian historiography from the 19th century onwards.[67] But in the post-communist context it takes a different dimension because post-communism, as Boris Buden and Giorgi Derluguian noted in different contexts, is experienced as a form of national liberation. The historiography of communism becomes then a way of singling out, of emphasizing the unique tragedy of the people faced with the imposition of a foreign regime and ideology –a trope essentially structuring the condemnation report as well, legitimazing it. Anti-communism becomes a form of national rebuilding, a new form of collective identity after 1989. Anti-communism and the type of historiography that it inspires are inseparable then from a primordialist understanding of the nation, a triumphant celebration of it. This is why, quite unsurprisingly, historians that were working in the nationalist vein of the Ceaușescu regime could very easily adapt to the tropes of anti-communism after 1989, especially by continuing to celebrate the nation and to exacerbate their methodological nationalism.[68]

But going back to the literati, given their literary formation, they were in fact less interested in historical investigation per se. Instead, they placed more emphasis on philosophical and moral problems, such as the evil nature of communism or the fate of the individual confronted with a totalitarian system. Stylistically too their writings were different from the standard canon of positivist historical investigation, employing a genre that mixed historical essay and philosophical introspection, leading to a boom in memories, recollections, diaries, confessions, letters and dialogues and thus creating an (auto)-biographical canon for the historical research. In this approach, the communist past was not only already transparent and accessible through experience and memory, but, more importantly, it was regarded simply as a pretext for a wider meditation on the nature of life in general.

Katherine Verdery argued that the success of the essayistic style established prior to 1989 in the circles advocating the resistance through culture was an outcome of its pretense to more sincerity in relation to the audience. Compared to the duplicitous nature of the official propaganda, the essay sought to engage the reader in a personal, direct way, to create an intimate relationship with the author while creating a particular world of words significantly at odds with that of the regime.[69] Even after 1989, the essay, especially in mainstream press, remained the mark of direct connection to the public, of genuine expression and thought, which magnified its popularity, in contrast, of course, with more academic and technical pieces.

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[65] Snyder.

[66] For methodological nationalism in Romanian historiography more generally, see Murgescu.

[67] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*.

[68] Without being the worst case, see Florin Constantiniu, *O Istorie Sinceră a Poporului RomâN*, Ed. a 4. revăzută și adăugită. ed. (București: Univers Enciclopedic, 2008).

[69] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*.

What is important to note here though is that most of the memories of the past were produced along the same lines governing the anti-communist discourse: victimization, sufferance and resistance on the background of total evil. The anti-communist paradigm offered the discursive space for the production of memories of victimhood and resistance, while these memories in turn fostered, reinforced and substantiated anti-communism's main claims. Furthermore, the prominent role played by personal memories, by memory in general, in the anti-communist paradigm led to a complex process of "memorialization" of the past. The memory of the victims and of their sacrifices was supposed to be honored and respected rather than properly investigated, deconstructed or analyzed historically.

This is also a salient feature of the report as well. It appears in fact as a piece of autobiographical exploration, self-presentation and auto-poesis. A large number of memories, diaries and recollections are woven into the structure of the report as sources and data while entire sections of the report deal with biographical details concerning members of the communist elite or other important actors, usually the dissidents. Perhaps even more important is the fact that some of the most prominent authors of the report are also its main actors, inscribing the text with a powerful form of self-referentiality. For example, the report discusses at length the role of Tismăneanu's family in establishing the communist rule in Romania and the dissident actions of Ticu Dumitrescu, Radu Filipescu, Virgil Ierunca, Monica Lovinescu and Stelian Tănase, all members of the commission that wrote the report.

Autobiography appears then as the essential feature of the report and of anti-communism more generally. Autobiography is the genre that brings together the subject and the process of writing itself: the subject in writing. John B Thompson wrote that ideology tends to assume a narrative form. "*Stories are told which justify the exercise of power by those who possess it, situating these individuals within a tissue of tales that recapitulate the past and anticipate the future*".[70] Narrativizing one's existence through autobiography is at the same time a form of subjectivization (subjecting one to the action of power in the Foucauldian sense of giving a confession), but also a form of domination, of mastering power. Levi Strauss observed that "*When writing makes its debut, it seems to favor exploitation rather than enlightenment of mankind…If my hypothesis is correct, the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate enslavement of other human beings.*[71]

Jacques Derrida made a similar point by emphasizing that writing is the power to create an archive, or, to put it Foucauldian terms, to generate truth and knowledge.[72] Writing is an inscription, leaving a trace, the male power par excellence.[73] Every text is caught up in a system of references to other texts and other sentences creating a

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[70] John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[71] Levi Strauss, On writing in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 1st American ed. (New York,: Criterion Books, 1961)., quoted in Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain : Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). p 3, note 2

[72] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever : A Freudian Impression*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[73] Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History : Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

vast web of meanings.[74] In autobiography, life and writing, history and meaning are fused together in a powerful account that inscribes the author with authority (and vice-versa). By constructing the report as an autobiography, its authors sought not only to describe the past, but also to control it.

In his book *Absurdistan*, Dorin Tudoran pinpointed to a particular phenomenon of post-communism regarding memory, diary and autobiography.[75] He noted how after the fall, many intellectuals engaged in the production of particular forms of texts: diaries written after 1989 but presented as if they were written before, as samizdat. In this way, people wanted to construct their autobiography as solitary opponents to communism. The problem with such retrospective constructions of memories is that actual memory is always fallible and prone to errors. Consequently, many of these post hoc diaries were filled with factual errors that were otherwise impossible if written at the time of their actual occurrence. But is not the condemnation report, in this autobiographical form, a similar attempt, collective this time, to rewrite personal memories and personal histories of dissidence and resistance? Is not the report an attempt to give a biographical intelligibility to a generational experience, to make it comprehensible but also to invest it with the authority of history? The role of the autobiography is then to offer continuity but it can only do so in the context of ruptures. There is no need to point to continuities if there are no ruptures. The process is always dialectical.

By emphasizing the rupture of 1989, the authors of the autobiographies and of the report could then become involved in a collective project of patching the past and the present together in a new coherent, justifying narrative. But by emphasizing rupture, the continuities with the past were hidden and repressed. Besides being a form of self-presentation and confession, the report appears to be also a form of overcoming one's personal trauma, of settling accounts with one's past. The report offered for some the best possibility to fight the regime in its absence, and to erase their own past of quietism and acquiescence, while for others it gave the possibility for further explanations of their past actions.[76]

History-as-Memory

Michael Foucault pointed out in *The Order of Things* that history both shapes and „clutters" our memory. As it were, personal memories are never autonomous but always-already shaped by history… "*the most erudite, the most aware, the most cluttered area of our memory…*".[77] While for Foucault too history is internal to memory, history nonetheless preserves a productive power, an "*unavoidable element in our thought*" from which beings emerge into subjective existences. What the focus on autobiography of the report, and of anti-communism more generally, seems to do is to revert this relationship: it is memory, and biography, that clutters history. History

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[74] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 1st American ed., World of Man (New York,: Pantheon Books, 1971).

[75] Dorin Tudoran, *Absurdistan : O Tragedie Cu Ieșire La Mare*, Ego Publicistică (Iași: Polirom, 2006).

[76] In addition, for many members of the commission, but also for many Romanian anti-communists in general, the denial of communism through anti-communism is a straightforward denial of the name of the Father: a symbolic killing of the phallic order that constitutes in turn the taboo of the post-socialist society.

[77] Foucault. See also, Carolyn Steedman and Rutgers University Press., *Dust : The Archive and Cultural History*, Encounters (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).pp. 66.

becomes only a form of exemplary memory and exemplary biography, usually of the elites.

The very distinction between "history" and "memory" is challenged. Ever since Romanticism, "History" has been opposed to "Memory". While the former was bestowed with objective and scientific credentials because of its production within the stringencies of particular epistemic rules and scholarly practices, the latter was circumscribed to the level of personal experiences and particular subjective predispositions. History then was considered an abstraction and objectification of the personal and, ultimately, a denial of memory through historicization. The two categories are in fact epistemologically separated and historically embedded in very different, and sometimes opposing, social practices and institutions.

Post-communist historiography complicated this relationship even further. On the one hand it emphasized the epistemic values of "memory" and used it to challenge the scientific pretentions of "history"; on the other hand it relativized "history" by considering it just another form of "memory" from which the subjective and situated positions have been abstracted and effaced. Hence, "history" and "memory" were both considered equally meaningful "stories". Furthermore, this shift entailed that the terms of the opposition have themselves changed: it is not simply the case that "memory" is a form that opposes "history" (as it has traditionally been the case), but that "history" itself becomes nothing else than a sum of memories. History and memory overlap into a new form of historical narrative and epistemic: *history-as-memory*.

This changes the very mode of historical investigation. This type of historiography does not even attempt to make a claim to "objectivity" and "scientificity" –the two main tenets of the discipline dating back to 18th century. On the contrary, as mentioned above, it is shaped by claims to "justice" and "truth". The investigation of the past ceases to be an exercise of objective, analytical and dispassionate knowledge (if ever was such a thing) and instead seeks to identify the perpetrators, to console the victims and generally to ascertain a sense of reparation in relation to the past. From this perspective, the legitimacy of the historical narratives is offered not necessarily by the adherence to a set of epistemic rules that govern their making, but more importantly, by their relationship to the "historical truth". Thus, "the truth" is both internal and external to the historical investigation: on the one hand the examination of the past has to bring the truth to light, on the other hand, it has to confirm to the already existing categories of truth and justice that oppose victims to perpetrators.

Because of its emphasis on "truth" and "justice" and its ambition to bring history to offer moral judgments, *history-as-memory* offers a clear example of what postmodernism called "situated knowledge". The historical voice and the historical narrative are those of the "victims" and the investigation of the past is made from this perspective. As such, "truth" and knowledge" are effectively separated: knowledge of the past ceases to overlap with the truth about the past; now truth can be achieved only by presupposing a moral perspective prior to the historical investigation as such and highly rooted in auto-biographical experience. In this process, the claims to objectivity, dispassionate rationality and total knowledge are inconceivable. What matters is the personal, embodied truth of the lived experience.

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Seen from this perspective, *history-as-memory* appears to be a part of the wider global process of contestation of the traditional grand historical narratives, a process most familiar by the name of post-modernism. As such, post-communism and post-modernism share not only their function as ideologies of late capitalism,[78] but also their deep rejection of the basic tenets of high-modernism, more generally.[79] Post-communism, and its dominant anti-communist ideology that inspired the writing of history and other forms of relationship to the past, effectively represented the post-modernist moment in the former Eastern bloc. Post-modernism and post-communism respectively fulfill then a similar role: they are both ideologies of the governing classes, sharing a similar set of assumptions, institutional networks and material interests. Perhaps the best example of a quilting point of the two networks is the explosion of post-communist, dissident memories and literature in the West immediately after 1989, telling the stories from the other side of the divide. Post-communist histories of communism were produced *as* personal memories, as stories of dissidents and victims, perfectly fitting the ideological expectation about the East, but also a type of genre specific to post-modernism. The Easterners finally had a voice and a lot of experiences to tell about. But the point not to be missed here is that precisely this welcoming attitude towards the harsh memories of the Easterners prolonged in fact an entrenched Orientalist tradition in which the West is the subject and creator of history and the East the realm of memory, tradition and orality.[80]

But I claim that post-communist historiography –just like post-modernism- represents in fact a form of history writing specific to the endgame of (Soviet) modernity. Pace Fukuyama, it is a type of writing specific to the end of history. To this effect, Andreas Huyssen in *Twilight memories* wrote:

> My hypothesis therefore, is that the current obsession with memory is not simply a function of the fin de siècle syndrome, another symptom of postmodern pastiche. Instead it is a sign of the crisis of that structure of temporality that marked the age of modernity with its celebration of the new as utopian, as radically and irreducibly other.[81]

Post-communist historiography is a type of historiography specific to a global "age of transition"[82], not simply –or not just- post-modern. What is characteristic to it is that by replacing history with memory it reduces knowledge to a process of revelation and illumination that in turn simply deems one's biography extraordinary and meaningful. The past is then accessible only to the initiated few, to the priests of the temple, who will then act as promoters of a "national pedagogy of memory" [83] in a corporate society reminiscent of G.K. Chesterton's universe dominated by police-philosophers and historians.[84] The past is not available anymore for scientific exploration but is strictly connected to its direct, biographical experience. It can only be remembered

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[78] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).
[79] Buck-Morss.
[80] Johannes Fabian coined the term allochronism for this hierarchy. See Fabian.
[81] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories : Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995).pp. 6.
[82] Hopkins and Wallerstein.
[83] Vladimir Tismaneanu, oral communication, Central European University, 2010
[84] G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday : A Nightmare*, Dover ed. (New York: Dover, 1986).

and invoked. Also it excludes other biographies, and other trajectories, especially of those who cannot acquire the status to write and express their own experiences and trajectories.

In *The names of History*, Jacques Rancier wrote that only by rediscovering its literaturness the historical writing can reassume the power of a discourse of truth that then could be politically mobilized for giving voice to the people.[85] But the post-communist experience I describe here, in which the literaturness of the historical writing was reassumed by the writings of the anti-communist literati to the extent that it was transformed in a new genre of *history-as-memory*, points in fact to the opposite direction: the literatureness of the historical writing can lead to the enclosure of the historical discourse and investigation by a privileged few.

The autobiographical focus of anti-communism, privileging the experiences and memories of the dissidents and intellectuals, also engender a new regime of memory and memory politics which tends to dismiss the alternative memories and autobiographical practices, especially of the working classes, as "nostalgic", as steeped into the past but also as "fake", since they cannot comprehend the historical truth about the communist past. This framing in turn elicits the need for the pedagogy of memory of the nation: that is, a process in which the memory and experiences of the dissidents, elevated to the status of history (especially following the publication of the report), are preserved, disseminated and exposed in order to educate and imprint a new, this time correct, memory on the "nostalgic" masses. Obviously, the quintessential institution to do that is the museum of communism. To the tension between nostalgia and museum I turn in the next chapter.

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[85] Rancière.pp. 51-52

3. Competing Regimes of Memory: From Nostalgia to the Museum of Communism

In September 2010 a new opinion pool showed that 61% of Romanians considered communism a good idea, at fault being only its implementation. Over 50% believed that life was much better before 1989, while for 25% Nicolae Ceaușescu did good things for the country. Moreover, some 50% rated communism a positive experience. The pool was commandeered by *Institutul pentru Investigarea Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc* (IICCMER), the state institute led by Vladimir Tismăneanu since 2009, mandated to cultivate the memory of communism and of its crimes in keeping with the findings and recommendations of the condemnation report.[1] Predictably, employees of the institute, called to interpret the survey in public media, considered the figures a clear sign of the prevailing nostalgia among the population and therefore asked for a "national pedagogy of memory" to eradicate it.[2]

In this context, Adrian Cioflâncă, a historian and Director of the Department for Society, Economy and Institutions of IICCMER, went further and constructed a symptomatology of the nostalgic phenomena in Romania.[3] He identified four nostalgic categories. The first category is that of the *restorative nostalgics*, some 10-20% of the population. They want the restoration of communism, are hostile to democracy and live predominantly in the poor south and northeast regions of the country. They are in their 40s, have a penchant for authoritarianism and are open xenophobes.

A second category identified by the historian is that of the *revolted nostalgics*, some 50% percent of the population. They do not necessarily regret the communist past, but they are disappointed by the present living conditions. They tend to repress the bad memories of communism and highlight only the good ones in order to counterpoise them to the present situation.

The *polemical nostalgics* constitute the third category of nostalgic longing. They are active social segments, working primarily in the private sector and have some minimal education about the communist crimes. It is not clear in what sense they are polemical, but one can infer from the text that their nostalgia is akin to the postmodern integration of the communist paraphernalia into consumption practices: like wearing an old pin to a retro party.

Finally, the *young nostalgics* are those under 20 and did not experience communism directly. But they have a nostalgic representation of communism due to a bad education both at home and at school. For them, the pedagogy of memory should be a priority, concluded Cioflâncă.

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[1] The survey is available on the institute's webpage (http://www.iiccr.ro/ro/sondaje_iiccmer_csop/).

[2] For a larger overview of these positions see my piece: http://www.criticatac.ro/2034/nostalgie-pedagogie-umor-sau-despre-a-doua-venire-a-anti-comunismului/

[3] His text is available here: http://www.revista22.ro/nostalgia-pentru-comunism-8962.html. Retrieved March 15, 2013.

This description portrays nostalgia as a genuine disease affecting the social body of the nation in post-communism that demands urgent treatment from the specialists, especially historians. In fact, more generally, in the post-communist East nostalgia has been portrayed as the unwanted haunting specter of the past, preventing the full integration into "Europe" and a return to normality. In turn, for the Westerners, nostalgia became a trademark sentiment of the Easterners (*Ostalgia*), the sign of their protracted transition between two worlds. Nostalgia was considered both a sign of the failure to adapt to the present and also its main cause: a constant longing for the good old days of collectivity, state protection and limited individual action. As such, it was deemed inappropriate for the new world of market individualism and dog-eat-dog competition specific to western capitalism. Nostalgia was a clear sign of inferiority, a distinct cultural and moral trait specific to the Homo Sovieticus, the long lasting discursive, emotional and embodied vestige of the past. It had to be eradicated by all means possible. One such central means was considered to be the Museum of Communism. Its potential to spatially and visually display the horrors of the communist past deemed it a potent weapon against nostalgia.

This is the double focus of this chapter. First I examine the concept of nostalgia itself and the way it was defined, articulated and employed in various discourses, academic and political. I show that despite its ubiquity, the meaning of the concept is usually taken for granted and not properly scrutinized. Instead of subscribing to the positivistic lure of measuring nostalgic sentiments, I suggest a different approach in the direction of a historical deconstruction of the concept. I show that nostalgia far from being a genuine substantive phenomenon of the destitute classes' longing for the past, is in fact sustaining the project of local liberal elites for hegemony and class dominance. Western academic research on the topic of nostalgia, by employing it as a substantive category, enforces this liberal paradigm, but with a twist: in these studies, nostalgia of the destitute classes becomes a form of empowerment, a form of popular memory. I challenge this by showing that nostalgia is not a popular discourse but an elite construction and therefore it is not about the communist past but about the present infused with anti-communism.

In the second part of the chapter I discuss the phenomena of museification of the communist past as an attempt of the liberal anti-communist elites to educate the masses and fight nostalgia. In fact, the museum is one of the central institutions envisaged to replace the popular memory with "history-as-memory" put forward by the anti-communist discourse and specifically by the condemnation report. I show that two overlapping forces sustain this process: on the one hand a global process of musealization and cultural consumption, on the other a self-colonial preoccupation of the Eastern Europeans for the gaze of the western Other. The museification of the communist past functions then as a form of signaling a definitive break with the past, its total overcoming. The museum introduces a gap between the present and the past in which the past appears tamed, framed and risible. The museum of communism, despite the horrific aspects of the past it tends to highlight, reflects in fact Marx's old quip that one should part with the past laughing.

I. A Specter is Haunting Post-Communist Eastern Europe: The Specter of Nostalgia

A Thomas Theorem of Nostalgia

The body of work dealing with nostalgia in Eastern Europe is by now so large that no one feels at home anymore engaging it. But I believe the problem is not necessarily the size of the field, but its focus. Most of the accounts share the presupposition that there is "something" substantive called nostalgia, inevitably always invoking its etymology: *nostos-* to return home and *algia-* longing. Nostalgia is the longing to return home. That "something" though is quite vague.

In her introduction to a collection of academic texts on nostalgia, Maria Todorova cogently expressed this ambiguity when she wrote: "*It may not be too bold to state that there is a broad consensus on the fact that the phenomenon [of nostalgia] exists (or at least something that is represented as a phenomenon under the designation nostalgia)*".[4] While not entirely specifically circumscribed, nostalgia appears not only graspable, but also measurable through a series of empirical research tools that in turn testify to its existence. Do we not encounter here something similar to the Thomas theorem: something that is defined as real produces real effects? But is there truly a real phenomenon called nostalgia? Is there such a longing for the communist past that needs to be grasped theoretically and understood that fits the rubric of nostalgia? By contrast, should we not perhaps ask different questions, such as the social role nostalgia plays in the present, its social functions, its class character and political implications in post-communism? Coined initially by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688, the term nostalgia tried to express the complex changes, especially emotional and bodily, engendered by the dramatic effects of deterritorialization brought about by modernity.[5] Does the term then fittingly express also the changes engendered by the end of the (Soviet) modernity?

The book that contributed most to the fetishization of the concept of nostalgia, especially in relation to Soviet modernity and post-communism, is undoubtedly Svetlana Boym's all too poetical *The Future of Nostalgia*, ubiquitously quoted by all studies in the field.[6] Beautifully written and at times extremely insightful, Boym's book is nonetheless a literary essay infused with personal recollections rather than a sustained effort to map out the social contours of the phenomena at the end of the Soviet modernity. As such, it has great artistic and literary qualities but does little to help theorize contemporary nostalgia or to grasp its articulation in particular post-communist social, political and ideological contexts.

Conceptually, *The Future of Nostalgia* rests on the distinction between "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia". The former stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home while the latter emphasizes *algia*, the longing itself that consequently delays indefinitely the homecoming. This distinction is further grafted onto another one: between state-induced nostalgia that plays the card of a mythical coherent and glorious past easily mobilized for political nationalist

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[4] Todorova and Gille.pp. 2

[5] See Dominic Boyer, *Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany, *Public Culture Spring 2006 18(2): 361-381*

[6] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

purposes, and an individual nostalgia, that has more critical, exploratory and pensive implications. Naturally, Boym prefers the latter.

Through this distinction nostalgia is de-politicized and circumscribed to a realm of personal identity and life-style that neatly sustains a neoliberal view of the autonomous, de-territorialized subject that can exist in the non-space of the longing itself. Little wonder then that the capitalist version of nostalgia is the market for retro products and fashions that sustains projects of middle class distinction and taste. Furthermore, the very distinction Boym makes between political nationalism and cultural intimacy, as it were between a bad nostalgia and a good nostalgia, defeats the initial purpose of analyzing nostalgia not as an individual sickness but as a symptom of our age. This distinction mobilizes in fact the liberal paradigm in which individual nostalgia appears as a form of *resistance* to the overarching narratives of progress and development specific to the modern nation-state:

> What is crucial is that nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into local and universal possible. The nostalgic creature has internalized this division, but instead of aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearns for the particular.[7]

Boym's notion of the local cannot but bring to mind James C. Scott's concept of the *metis*, the practical, experiential local knowledge he opposes to the authoritarian science of the state, an opposition that for Scott defines the very core of western modernity and its paroxysm, high-modernism.[8] In both accounts modernity appears as a moment of rupture with the local tradition and the unity of time and space. This is obvious. Nonetheless, the problem arises precisely in the way in which this rupture is theorized. For Boym, the longing for the pre-modern, local embedding leads to the formation of the nostalgic sentiment. For Scott, it leads to the forgetting of the metis and the overarching perspective of the state and uniformed knowledge.

In his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin made the more radical point that the mechanical reproduction specific to capitalist production is not simply destroying the aura of the work of art, but rather it makes us aware of it.[9] Similarly, modernity is not simply the denial of the local space-time experience, but it is precisely the moment when we become aware of this very distinction and of the locality itself. As such, nostalgia is not simply a response to modernity's transformations, but the medium through which we become aware of these transformations. Similarly, it is only through modernity that we become aware of the metis. The local and organic reality appear as a theoretical problem and object of longing only through the uprooting and destruction caused by modernity, only after modernity introduced a break with and counterpoised an abstraction to the pre-modern past.

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[7] Boym, pp. 10-11.
[8] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State : How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale Agrarian Studies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
[9] Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

Nostalgia is an eminently modern phenomenon and as such it expresses the very paradoxes of modernity in a modern language, just like the Romantics - the nostalgics *par excellence* - expressed their distaste for modernity in modern language and constructions. As such, nostalgia has little to do with the past in fact, but with the present. It is a malaise of the present time. While indeed the nostalgic discourse mobilizes references to a mythological past, its focus is on the present and on the future. Far from being a simple disease of the soul or a melancholic fixation with an irretrievable past, nostalgia is a *political* claim to a degree of control of the present and the future – a claim made from within modernity against itself.

Nostalgia In and Out of Academia

A series of important recent studies in anthropology engaged the phenomena of nostalgia in post-communism. For example, Daphne Berdahl showed that nostalgia is a form of counter-memory and an attempt to assert an Eastern identity after the Wende.[10] Nostalgia has the role of validating a shared past, a collective sense of belonging to a history completely discredited after the 1989 transformations. Furthermore, Berdahl noted that nostalgia is also a form of mourning for the lost control over production, for the autopoiesis of the workers who used to have at least some social control over their labor and the products of their labor. After all, post-socialism entailed precisely the disenfranchisement of workers at their work place and their transformation into cheap, flexible and disposable labor force.

Tanja Petrovici made a similar point in relation to the former Yugoslav workers.[11] The way workers talk about their past emphasizes the ability to have control over production. Nostalgia then is not necessarily about the past but is a longing for having social relevance and social respect. In all former communist countries, including Yugoslavia, the workers have been dispossessed, discredited and marginalized after 1989, not only through privatizations but also through moral exclusions. Seen as the main beneficiaries of the communist regime, they had no place in the ensuing arrangements after 1989, completely dominated by bourgeois, neoliberal values. Frances Pine noted that when people invoke the communist past they are not amnesiac or nostalgic but they seek to contrast the past and the present in order to make a point. People are not oblivious to the corruption, humiliations and hardships that define the past, but they choose to emphasize the economic security, the dignity, the universal health care and free education they now lack.[12]

Kristina Fehervary similarly wrote that nostalgia is an attempt to reclaim the value of living during communism, while the mass produced objects become visible reminders of those times, leading to a reconsideration of the value of the capitalist commodities once so admired.[13] Neringa Klumbyte showed how the Soviet sausage renaissance in Lithuania represents a critique of the post-communist neoliberal transformations and an active attempt to define a form of alternative, post-Soviet modernity.[14] Summing up these approaches, Maria Todorova wrote that nostalgia is a form of critical comment of the present, and not an irrational desire to go back to the times of

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[10] Daphne Berdhal, Goodbye, Lenin! In, Todorova and Gille.

[11] Tanija Petrovici, Nostalgia for JNA? Remebering the Army in the Former Yugoslavia, In ibid.

[12] Frances Pine, Retreat to the Household? Gender Domains in Post-socialist Poland, in Hann.

[13] Krisztina Fehérváry, Goods and States: The Political Logic of State Socialist Material Culture, *Comp. Studies in Society & History* 51 (2): 426-459, 2009.

[14] Neringa Klumbyté, The Soviet Sausage Renaissance, *American Anthropologist* 112 (1): 22-37, 2010.

communism. As such, nostalgia is in fact nostalgia for utopia, for the future, for the fulfillment of dreams and possibilities denied in the present.[15]

Gerald Creed, working in a Bulgarian setting, shares with the aforementioned remarks the belief that nostalgia is the expression of the traumatic rupture Eastern Europeans experienced at the end of the Soviet modernity when their lives were torn asunder by the new transformations.[16] Consequently, he suggested we should take nostalgia literally as a psychological illness caused by the transition and as such regard it as an important locus for the study of post-communist socioeconomic discontent. In this context Creed is right to ask: "*Would we call the outrage and disappointment felt by General Motors workers in Flint, Michigan, when they see the abandoned business in their neighborhoods "nostalgia*"?[17] But, despite agreeing that nostalgia is a form of critical commentary of the present by the destitute classes, Creed nonetheless goes a step further and attempts to delineate the specificity of nostalgia. Consequently, he suggests that the term nostalgia can be applied only when two criteria have been met: when there is no danger for the past to return and when improvement in the present is evident. In addition, he writes:

> [O]stalgia furthers the consolidation of neoliberalism in Bulgaria. It does so by invalidating the complaints of the disenfranchised and traumatized by labeling their desires nostalgic. It then encases them in marketable knickknacks and symbols, which accomplishes a further trivialization as well as a concomitant devaluation since most Socialist-era material culture seems patently inferior or naïve by contemporary capitalist standards.[18]

In a similar vein Maya Nadkarni, in the Hungarian context, noted that nostalgia represents a celebration of the distance from the past expressed through its commodification and celebration in capitalism.[19] Nostalgia is a form of playful and ironic identification with a past cleansed by its contradictions and menacing features that can be subsequently incorporated into a form of local identity after 1989. To put it differently, for both Creed and Nadkarni nostalgia is a phenomenon that appears when people have the feeling that they master the present, when they feel they are in control of their lives, which in turn enables them to ironically refer back to the past. Once this sense of control is lost, as it was the case during various moments of the transition but also after the 2009 financial crisis, nostalgia seems to fade out of fashion. Nadarkani points out that once nostalgia loses its ironic and kitsch aspect, at least in the Hungarian context she studies, it functions as a device for dividing the nation. The invocation of the communist past becomes similar to the preservation of "privileges" (such as pensions and social security) in a context of material scarcity and intra-generational competition for resources.

The immediate question that arises here is about the precise moment when nostalgia ceases to be a critical commentary of the present situation and becomes instead an

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[15] Todorova, Introduction to Todorova and Gille.

[16] Gerlad W. Creed, Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria. In, ibid.

[17] Creed in ibid., pp. 36.

[18] Creed, in ibid., pp. 42

[19] Maya Nadkarni, "But it's hours" Nostalgia and the Politics of Authenticity in Pos-Socialist Hungary, In, Todorova and Gille.

ironic, playful take of the past? Or, to put it in more general terms, how does neoliberalism manage to channel genuine political grievances about the present into identity constructions and marketable commodities while playing down their critical and oppositional potential? Since neither Creed nor Nadkarni embedded their analysis in concrete class articulations and relations, their entire discussion about nostalgia seems to remain suspended into an abstract realm in which it is not at all clear who are the subjects supposed to be nostalgic or, at the opposite end, those supposed to be enjoying the neoliberal codification of nostalgia.

By contrast, Dominique Boyer rightfully showed that in the context of post-socialist Germany, Ostalgie is not a symptom of East German nostalgia but more a symptom for West German utopia. Boyer uses the term utopia as a *"naturalizing fantasy that creates an irrealis space, literally a 'no-place', in which East Germans' neurotic entanglement with authoritarian pastness allows those Germans gendered western to claim a future free from the burden of history"*.[20] Nostalgia is then a western construct projected onto the East in order to construe it as backward, stuck in time and less civilized. Moreover, in this construction, nostalgia suggests a fixation with memory and the past specific to the easterners still caught up in the Cold War binaries, as opposed to the westerners always concerned with and looking towards the future. As such, nostalgia is a construct that denies coevalness to the Eastern Europeans while simultaneously imagining the East as allochronous.[21]

In the context of Germany this construction is even more poignant, writes Boyer, since after 1989 West Germany could project its repressed failure to deal with the Nazi past onto the Eastern Europeans, compelled now to come to terms with their own communist past. To put it in more general terms, by displacing the burden of coming to terms with the past onto the post-communist Eastern Europeans, the West was exempted from properly scrutinizing its own repressed past, not only regarding the horrors of Nazism but also in relation to other war and colonial crimes. What Boyer describes then is the construction of an Orientalizing narrative in which the West attributes nostalgia to the East in order to highlight its backwardness: temporal and civilizational. This construction, in turn, forces the Easterners to confront their own past, to come to terms with it after the fall of communism in 1989, a process encouraged and financed by the west. The lack of confrontation with the past in the West is aggressively displaced onto the East, constituting simultaneously a sign of its backwardness, but also a positive precondition to overcome it.[22]

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[20] Boyer, Ostalgie and the Politics of Future in Eastern Germany, pp. 363.

[21] While I believe Boyer is right to draw this parallels, what is missing is to take a step further and compare the so-called Ostalgia with Nostalgia in the west: nostalgia for the good old times of prosperity of the middle classes, of financial security and a simpler world, best discernable in popular culture productions like Mad Men. It is in fact a conservative response to the current woes of global capitalism, a nostalgia for the privilege in the core of the world system that is now perceived to be lost.

[22] In a second stage, this very construction offers the possibility for the displacement of West's own lack of confrontation with the past. The west can now act as the guarantor of effecting transitional justice in the East. The Romanian case I studied offers a strong backing to this argument. There, one of the most active international western foundations heavily involved in sponsoring actions pertaining to dealing with the communist past is Konrad Adenaeur Stiftung. This is remarkable since Konrad Adenaeur himself was vocally opposed to de-Nazification practices in West Germany after 1945. The uncivilized East becomes then the perfect terrain for enacting practices that are simply inconceivable in the West –just like with the brutal neoliberal structural adjustments, one might add.

To this Western constructionist perspective, Boyer added three more substantive characteristics of nostalgia, this time shared by the Eastern Europeans themselves. First, nostalgia is a heteroglosic phenomenon that expresses a variety of discourses and claims and therefore cannot be unified into a simple desire to go back to the past. Secondly, nostalgia is an indexical practice, which means that the invocation of nostalgia has the role of building and differentiating between communities and groups and plays a part into drawing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. As such, Boyer is right to note that it is usually the post-communist liberal elites that ascribe nostalgic impulses to members of the former working classes in order to portray them as backward and stuck in the past and as such to highlight their Europeanness and distinction. Finally, for Boyer too, nostalgia always refers to a politics of the future. Hence, what nostalgia does in Eastern Europe is on the one hand to express estrangement from the post-communist transformations of Eastern Europe, usually the result of "road-maps" devised outside the region, and on the other hand to signal the desire for future self-determination.[23]

If we sum up the conceptual approaches of nostalgia described above –some of the most articulate in the field – then we reach a theoretical impasse. First, nostalgia seems to describe a western colonial and imperial construction, projected onto the post-communist populations that are imagined as backward and uncivilized. Nostalgia appears only as the latest installment of the centuries' old process of Othering the East, critically described by Larry Wolff[24] and Maria Todorova[25], as a more general colonial process subsumable to the rubric of Orientalism analyzed by Edward Said.[26]

Secondly, it seems that nostalgia is a genuine empowering post-communist phenomenon that describes the critical stance of the disenfranchised classes in relation to the post-communist present, expressing their desire for a better future. But here a new paradox arises: the nostalgic discourse can be critical and lead to resistance against the post-communist neoliberal transformations, or it can be mobilized for nationalist and reactionary politics. The line dividing the two is thin and shifting.[27]

In a third twist, nostalgia is nothing but the construction of the local liberal elites that seek to gender themselves Western and civilized by differentiating themselves from the backward local populations, usually the destitute working classes. This imposition of nostalgia on the working classes sustains then the anti-communist arguments for pedagogy of memory: members of the working classes and their offspring need to be properly educated about the communist past.

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[23] See also, Dominic Boyer, From Algos to Autonomous. Nostalgic Eastern Europe and Postimperial Mania, In Todorova and Gille.

[24] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe : The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[25] Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[26] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[27] For a wider discussion of this ambivalence and of the way genuine popular discontent with the realities of post-communism are re-codified in a language of fear by conservative and extreme right – wing politics see Kalb and Halmai. In this context, by branding people's critical commentaries as nostalgic anti-communism operates in fact a displacement and a normalization, preventing a progressive political articulation of these sentiments. On this aspect see, Don Kalb and Florin Poenaru, Guest Editors' Forward for the special issue on "Politics of Memory", *Studia Sociologia*, Vol. 56. 2/2011

These inbuilt ambivalences and largely contradictory features of the concept of nostalgia seems to have ensured its popularity across the social sciences and in non-academic, political and journalistic circles as well. Nostalgia can offer plausible explanations for a variety of phenomena while always making available a series of ready-made answers. It can be an elite construction, or it can be a popular one, it can be against neoliberalism or it can sustain it, it can be an imperial construction, or it can be a national fantasy, it can be a liberal inquiry, or a conservative longing.

From Nostalgia to Disenchantment

Despite its flexible meaning, the concept of nostalgia does indeed point to a unifying theme: in all accounts it is either a form of external imposition or a form of passive, limited reaction. As such, post communist Eastern Europeans are not only deemed backward and allochronous but they are also denied agency and power to shape their own lives. They are reduced only to passive objects of history that can never attain the status of historical subjects.

The following fragment from David Kideckel's ethnography of Romanian destitute workers after 1989 is illustrative:

> Reacting against the increased class divisions and insecurities of neo-capitalism, many workers long for a return to the security and predictability of socialism. Like miners and workers elsewhere in Russia and East-Central Europe, from the best case of the Czech Republic, through war-torn Serbia to prostrate Russia and Ukraine declining economic circumstances encourage a turn to socialist nostalgia, nationalist cant or frustrated inaction.[28]

The problem with this interpretation is that it seems to border the Romanian liberal elites' dismissive and patronizing perspective about the workers, offering it academic legitimation. In turn, what it fails to grasp is the actual dynamics of the former working classes during the transition period. Far from being passive objects of this historical transformation, falling into "*communist nostalgia, nationalist cant or frustrated inaction*", the former working classes actually had to start anew and make a living in adverse conditions. Waves of migration, especially to the southern economies of Spain and Italy in late 1990s and 2000s, led to a profound reconfiguration of these peoples' biographies.[29] They were anything but passive and nostalgic.

Surely, this fragmentation and dispersion of the communist working class also entailed the impossibility of collective organized strikes and other forms of collective labor struggle (with some exceptions). This might have created the false impression of resignation and quiet acquiescence. Also, faced with the new political and economic realities, underpinned by the disappearance of the language of class after

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[28] Kideckel in Hann, pp. 124

[29] There is an extensive literature on post-communist Eastern European work migration, linking this phenomenon with the transformation of work relations in former communist countries. I will like to point out here the work of Romanian sociologist Dumitru Sandu who collected a lot of useful data about the Romanian migration. See for example, Dumitru Sandu, *Lumile Sociale Ale MigraţIei RomâNeşTi ÎN StrăInăTate*, Collegium Sociologie, Antropologie (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010).

1989, most of these people began to express their political and social grievances in populist, even nationalist language. But this was the only one available in a neoliberal context in which local liberal elites were simply paving the way for global capital into national economies that in turn pushed down and away the former working classes.[30]

But instead of simply thinking about nostalgia as the discursive glue of this political form of re-subjectivization after 1989 –which is the standard view of the liberal elites in the first place – I suggest based on my fieldwork to use a different term: "disenchantment". I believe it is more adequate and evocative to describe the critical commentaries workers in precarious conditions, suffering from the post-communist readjustments but also from the workings of the global neoliberal economy more generally, make in relation both to the present and to the communist past. Disenchantment is thus a more encompassing term that expresses a loss of hope, a dramatic frustration of expectations and aspirations, a sense of defeat.

This transcends the 1989 divide. Communism elicited disenchantment long before its fall when it was obvious that it could not deliver on the promises it itself generated. The future of plenty was always more and more distant. Similarly, the transition period also quickly proved to be a disenchanting experience: the promise of a new beginning, of a better life soon turned out to be the reality of a constantly precarious work, especially for the former working classes. Disenchantment is then quite the opposite of nostalgia: the painful awareness that there is no safe past one can go back to, no real house one can aspire to return to. On the contrary, life seems trapped into permanent present with no real future to aspire to and a past that is condemned.

If the former working classes did not have time to wax nostalgic being too busy to make a living and too disenchanted to cling to the past, the liberal elites, especially the anti-communist intellectuals and former dissidents, were in fact the main generators of nostalgic discourse in post-communism. Therefore, they did not simply project nostalgia over the destitute classes (as some of the studies quoted above contend) but they were also the main producers of nostalgic discourse. The structure of their nostalgia was twofold: on the one hand a longing for the interwar period, considered the golden age of Romanian modernity destroyed by communism, and on the other hand a longing for the Cold war, the time when intellectuals and dissidents played a central role in relation to political power and international politics. I will examine them below.

Nostalgia for the Interwar

In post-communism, the fantasy of a return to the interwar was envisaged as a return to a moment when the effects of communism were absent. The appeal was doubled by the fact that the Romanian interwar was dominated by a fascination with the mythology of the Romanian peasant rooted in millenary traditions, largely encouraged by conservative and right wing intellectuals playing central roles in politics and public life. Communism was blamed to have destroyed these two main pillars: the peasantry through collectivization and industrialization and the intellectual class through a political and ideological privilege accorded to the laboring classes. Members of the Păltiniş group were the ones most active in sustaining this nostalgic discourse, portraying communism as a nefarious break with the "normal" run of

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[30] See Kalb, Conversation with a Polish populist; See also Kalb and Halmai.

history. Their link with the interwar was a direct one through Constantin Noica, an active member of the Criterion group, gathered around the right-wing, anti-Semite philosopher Nae Ionescu. The Pǎltiniş group was also imagined as a preserver of the Criterion group during the communist times, the last direct legacy of the intellectual and cultural interwar life.[31]

This form of nostalgia for the interwar was highly biographical. For the Pǎltiniş members, de-communization after 1989 necessary entailed a return to the values and social relations of that époque, with intellectuals taking center stage. And, indeed, the main device for creating the nostalgia for the interwar past was largely intellectual in nature, especially the publication of books about the period and the promotion of certain authors active back then. But inevitably, as it is the case with all such ideological constructions, the interwar past was not only schematized but all social contradictions and political struggles were conveniently written out. The interwar became a world of the aristocratic elite, the narrow urban bourgeoisie, especially the one located in Bucharest and, as a matter of exotic panache, the petty bourgeois of the urban periphery. As such, it was considered beautiful, civilized and European, a belief encapsulated by the totally Orientalizing, but proudly assumed nickname of Bucharest: "Little Paris". The misery, exploitation, deep inequalities, anti-Semitism and extreme-right political radicalism were all left out of the glossy interwar picture.[32]

I believe that the nostalgia for the interwar became popular and hegemonic because it could sustain the need of the self-imagined post-communist middle classes to assume a non- and anti-communist identity that would facilitate their symbolic aspiration to European status and validation after 1989. For this purposes the interwar mythology proved a perfect reservoir of identities in the post-communist context, but also fostered processes of gentrification of the old city centers by invoking a patrimonialist discourse in relation to the interwar past. Furthermore, the interwar fantasy also sustained calls for privatization and de-nationalization by invoking the private property rights of the former interwar owners. Far from being simply a cultural and intellectual discourse, nostalgia for the interwar period played an important part in legitimizing the processes of accumulation by dispossession ensuing after 1989, in conjunction, of course, with anti-communism. The aspiration for civilization of the middle classes met the economic interests of the local owners of capital, cached in the cultural and depoliticized terms of interwar nostalgia.

But not only anti-communist and dissident intellectuals perpetuated this nostalgia. Professional historians played an important part too. For example, for Adrian Majuru, the interwar was the last period of Romanian civilization. At the end of it, barbarism ensued, which explains the backward position of the country today. By bringing the masses and the lower tiers of the society to power (including here the gypsies),

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[31] Liiceanu; Patapievici, *Politice*. For a critical perspective see Sorin A. Matei, *Boierii Minţii : Intelectualii RomâNi ÎNtre Grupurile De Prestigiu ŞI Piaţa Liberă a Ideilor*, Altfel.

[32] So far, there is no study of the nostalgia for the interwar in Romanian post-communism. Instances of critical takes on this phenomenon, pointing to concrete examples are scattered around the intellectual press. For a more articulated starting point, see Ciprian Şiulea, *Retori, Simulacre, Imposturi : Cultură ŞI Ideologii ÎN RomâNia*, Altfel (Bucureşti: Compania, 2003). Laignel-Lavastine. However, an amply documented study of the interwar fascination after 1989 and its articulation in various branches of cultural and intellectual creation is urgently necessary, only to give recognition to the size of this phenomenon.

communism simply altered the vitality of the Romanian nation irremediably.[33] Adrian Cioroianu, close to the Păltiniş group and a member of GDS, attempted in several occasions to rehabilitate the king Carol II, in power for the last decade of the interwar and who instituted a monarchic dictatorship in 1938, the year considered to be the best in the history of Romania by the anti-communist intellectuals.[34]

Nostalgia for the Cold War

A different strand of elite nostalgia was constructed around the Cold War experience, especially that of the anti-communist intellectuals and political dissidents. For most of them, those were the times of maximum social and political relevance when their lives were imbricated in global political events, being part of the confrontation between the two poles of the Iron Curtain divide. This context offered their lives a clear meaning and, for some, limelight and notoriety.

I could observe this longing during the book launch of Dorin Tudoran's *Eu, fiul lor* [I, their son] – a collection of his secret police files.[35] Tudoran was one of the most important Romanian dissidents, openly opposing Ceauşescu's regime for not delivering on its promises, until he was forced to emigrate to Paris and then to the USA. Once in emigration he organized a powerful network of dissident voices of the regime and collaborated with US agencies for weakening the communist rule in Eastern Europe.

The book launch took place on the crammed premises of a private research institute of recent history. Most of the participants were political dissidents, some famous, some less so, old political prisoners, their friends and a handful of young historians, mainly associated with the institute. In total, there were not more than 30 people. The event did not elicit the attention of the media except for one or two relatively obscure magazines. This was supposed to be an important event: the publication of excerpts from the files of one of the most important Romanian dissidents.

The atmosphere of the meeting highly contrasted with the actual content of the book. In these files Dorin Tudoran and his friends were at the center of highly contentious political battles, engaging the regime critically and asking for its reform. During the peak of his dissident years, between late 1970s and early 1980s, Tudoran met various top echelon party bureaucrats, foreign ambassadors and high profile journalists. He was imprisoned, monitored, recorded and forced to emigrate. He took trips to Paris and Berlin and talked to Radio Free Europe. In short, his life resembled that of a John Le Caree character, only that his was real.

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[33] Nicolae Merişanu, Adrian Majuru, and Institutul Naţional pentru Memoria Exilului Românesc., *Puterea Comunistă ŞI Exilul ÎN Oglindă : Texte Polemice* (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional pentru Memoria Exilului Românesc, 2008). Majuru is well known for his writings on interwar Bucharest, in the same vein. See for example, Adrian Majuru, *BucureşTi : Diurn ŞI Nocturn* (Bucureşti: Curtea Veche, 2009).

[34] For a discussion and criticism of Adrian Cioroianu's views, see George Damian http://www.george-damian.ro/adrian-cioroianu-si-reabilitarea-lui-carol-al-ii-lea-799.html. For 1938 as the focal point of Romania's history, see the issue dedicated by the cultural weekly Dilema to this year. Unfortunately, I am unable to locate on their website the exact reference to this issue.

[35] Dorin Tudoran and Radu Ioanid, *Eu, Fiul Lor : Dosar De Securitate*, ColecŢIa Document (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010). I will discuss this book at length in the next chapter.

His recollection of past dissident actions enticed the rest of the participants to share theirs, especially their meetings with Tudoran. Slowly, the entire event became a session of retrospection, a collective act of remembering the communist days of action, relevance and suspense. After 1989, some like Tudoran, continued to remain close to politics and participated in various democratization projects or even acted as political consultants while retaining a strong public presence through writing. Others were less lucky and after the fall they sunk into obscurity, social irrelevance and even poverty, unimaginable even during communism. For them, events such as the one I describe here are the pretext for publicly staging their past relevance and political engagement.

It seems that anti-communism has in fact a powerful nostalgic component to it too. By continuing to fight communism after its demise in 1989 one is in fact trying to prologue his/her time of political relevance, of being in the center of events, of having a life full of meaning in the context of world changing politics. Anti-communism is then one of the most powerful forms of nostalgia that seeks to maintain the political relevance of dissidents in the present.

More generally, this longing is also a longing for the historical role of the intellectual in building the nation, specific to peripheral modernizing projects and to communism as well. Historically, the role of the national intellectual was that of leading the masses towards civilization and enlightenment, and in the process to play a critical role in relation to power, though being strictly connected to and dependent on it. This intellectual figure dominated the Romanian modernity since the middle of the 19th century all the way to the end of the interwar period. This offered prestige to the intellectual positions and significant symbolic power to shape ideologies and political programs.

Rather than dismissing it and turning towards the workers (as the anti-communist historiography claims), the communist regime in fact used the same mechanism in its own favor, mobilizing intellectuals (especially writers, artists and historians) in order to fulfill its ideological and social purposes. Intellectuals, even when dissidents, or especially then, were important for the regime since they could offer legitimacy and the appearance of criticism and pluralism. Intellectuals had a privileged relationship with the political power and a central part in the edifice of the society, making them a segment of the dominating class, even though their legitimacy was premised upon claims for speaking in the name of the masses and/or the nation (largely interchangeable in the context of Eastern Europe modernity).

Post-communism and the end of (Soviet) modernity more generally changed all that, and the national intellectual was quickly replaced with the TV pundit and the media star. In this context, only few of the former dissidents and anti-communist intellectuals could re-invent themselves and adapt to the new stringencies. The rest had to fall back to their old memories and call for various museification projects. I will discuss some of these museal desires and imaginations in the next section.

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II. The Museal Imagination: the unbearable gaze of the Other

The role of the museum is salient for the politics of history writing, memory and nostalgia discussed so far. It fulfills two concomitant functions: on the one hand it is an important device for the pedagogy of memory and institutionalization of the anti-communist version of "history-as-memory", on the other hand it aims to preserve the memory, experiences and life trajectories of the dissidents in a crystalized, official form. As such, their nostalgia about their own past is universalized and invested with institutional and official authority.

But at the same time the museum is also a place for framing the communist past as a sign of its overcoming. Something that is displayed in the museum is, sort of speak, dead. A museum of communism is the surest sign of its demise, of its powerlessness in the present. As such, through the museal framing, Eastern Europeans are able to leave behind and take a distance from their own past. In this museal display, their own experiences of the communist past takes the contours of an alterity, a foreign country, a strange time. To put it differently, the museum of communism enables the easterners to look at the communist past and the communist modernity with the eyes of the westerners.

Staging Horror and the Pleasures of Death

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche wrote that one of the purposes for carrying out a punishment, either to an individual or to a community, is to create a memory –in the sense of teaching a lesson and leaving a mark. In post-communism this relationship was effectively reversed: memory appeared to be a form of carrying out a punishment. This reversed relationship is best discernable in the manner in which visual, museual representations of communism had been constructed not only to display the past but also, and more importantly, to bring justice.

This relationship is best encapsulated by the motto of Sighet Memorial in Romania, a former communist prison where most of the interwar elites perished, now turned into a memorial and museum: "*When justice fails to be a form of memory, memory alone can be a form of justice*".[36] Sighet is one of the most celebrated museums and memorials of the victims of communism and of anti-communist resistance in Eastern Europe. Both a museum and a shrine, both a place for piety and research, the memorial stands out for the spectacular manner in which it portrays the communist experience.

Formed in 1993, the museum evolved from a commemorative memorial of the people who died in the prison to a general museum of the Romanian communism. Its main narrative depicts the communist society as a prison whose guardians killed and terrorized its citizens. Communism is reduced to a vast spectacle of death and extermination, a constant bloodbath. Surely, such a spectacular codification of the communist past was later made internationally famous by the success of the Terror

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[36] More detailed information about the Memorial can be found on its website: http://www.memorialsighet.ro/ Retrieved June 15, 2013.

Haza in Budapest, a real *tour de force* of extermination mechanisms and killing techniques. In the case of the Sighet museum, the horrific effects are magnified by its location in a former prison in Sighet, a small, ghost-like, border town in the far north of Romania.

Ștefan Tiron rightfully compared the Sighet memorial with a Hollywood blockbuster that uses a series of special effects to accompany a rather predictable and common plot.[37] The comparison is apt since what we witness at Sighet is a similar mechanism: the conventional story of anti-communism is told through the means of shocking effects, not necessarily through the aid of high-technology, but by simply using the premises of the former jail to stir emotions and fear. The museum is not concerned with actually conveying information about the past, but with impressing a sensation, a memory on the viewer, almost like leaving a mark in the Nietzschean sense. Experiencing the museum becomes literally a form of punishment, a moment of deep symbolic and emotional violence against the viewer that seeks to convey the brutality of the actual violence of the former prison.[38]

Undoubtedly, the quest for such a museal experience at the level of senses and sensations is a trademark of the post-modern museography. Instead of the linear, master-narratives of the modernist museographic representation, post-modern thinking is trying to instantiate an immediate, direct and emotional experience in the visitor – in keeping with the view of the viewer-subject as bricoleur, willing to choose his/her own pieces of information and experiences and mix them in a highly subjective narrative.[39] In this paradigm the museum aspires to pastiche the experience of other forms of popular cultures, especially movies. Or, as Andreas Huyssen put it: „*The new musuem and exhibition practices correspond to changing audience expectations. Spectators in ever larger numbers seem to be looking for emphatic experiences, instant illuminations, stellar events, and blockbuster shows rather than serious and meticulous appropriation of cultural knowledge...the new museum resurected as a hybrid space somewhere between public fair and department store*.[40]

This rethinking of the museum along post-modern lines was highly influenced by the popularity of various Holocaust museums established in different parts of the world from the late 1960s onwards which sought to recreate for the viewer the horrendous experiences faced by those sent to concentration and extermination camps.[41] In post-communism, intellectuals, historians and curator-artists took this mode of representation of the past as a model, in keeping with the ideological parallels drawn between Nazi and the communist experiences. The argument supporting this museal philosophy is that the visitors have to be made aware of the brutality of the regimes by having an unmediated experience of their violence.[42] Consequently, the museum is

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[37] Stefan Tiron http://thebureauofmelodramaticresearch.blogspot.com/2010/10/stefan-tiron.html

[38] This is part of a wider trend in the post-communist Eastern bloc, so large now that it has a name: Gulag tourism. The most dramatic re-enactment of communism as pure repression remains the Lithuanian Soviet bunker: http://sovietbunker.com/en/

[39] Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum : Beyond the Mausoleum*, Museum Meanings (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003).

[40] Huyssen, Twilight Memories, pp. 15.

[41] Paul Harvey Williams, *Memorial Museums : The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, English ed. (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2007).

[42] Ibid.

supposed to be pedagogical by literally implanting memories in one's mind and body, by offering a radical transfer of emotions.

In effect, every museum of communism seems to aspire to become a prison-like place. Horia Bernea, the first head of the Peasant Museum in Bucharest, poignantly expressed this aspiration:

> Pasternak said that a talented writer should describe those years [of the Stalinist purges] such that the blood of the readers freezes and their hair stands on end. This is the reaction we should have aimed for, but we obviously did not succeed. We could have obtained it only if we had closed visitors into the exhibition room among the objects which are all aggressively ugly and kept them there locked up without water, food or hygiene for a week.[43]

Bernea was lamenting here the failure of the exhibition called *Ciuma* [The Plague], organized by the museum. The exhibition portrayed the plight of the Romanian peasants collectivized by the communists. In this exhibition, also filled with horrific stories, collectivization appears then to be a deadly plague brought about by the communists that destroyed the fabric of the peasant life whose virtues the museum celebrates.

The Sighet museum and Ciuma exhibition are not simply attempts at representing the death, destruction and annihilation specific to the conditions of the prison. More to the point, they seek to relive the prison conditions in and through the museum. Discipline and punish take here on a new meaning: the discipline of the memory regime of anticommunism constructs memory as a form of punishment imposed on the viewer. Pedagogy and the representation of the past are inseparable from violence, hinting perhaps to the violence of replacing "wrong" memories of the communist past with the correct ones of "history-as-memory". Significantly, the official poster of the museum in Sighet is a photo of a boy and a girl looking with stunned faces through the small window *inside* a prison cell. The accompanying text asks: "*do you want to understand nowadays Romania*?" Maybe what they see inside the small prison cell is not necessarily the truth about the past, as the poster wants to suggest, but perhaps the truth about the present, locked in for pedagogical purpuses. Thomas Richards pointed out that:

> The architectonics of museums and armies had long been related: in the 18th century, when standing armies occupied fortresses, museums resembled magazines; during the first half of the 19th century, when the predatory tactics of Napoleon governed the conduct of war, museums became predators, often relying on armies for acquisition (as in the case of Elgin marbles) and often turning to tempestuous Napoleonic figures for leadership. In the late Victorian period the

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43 Quoted in Simina Badica, The black hole paradigm. Exhibiting Communism in Post-Communist Romania, in *History of Communism in Europe*, Bucharest, vol. 1/2010.

logistics of the archive came to be marked by a system of continuous supply linking base with base, and bases with metropole.[44]

In the 20th century then, it seems that museums and prisons form a continuum, serving the same educational and representational aspirations, undergirded by an equally powerful desire for visibility, order and exhibition. Or, to put it more generally, in modernity the museum plays a similar role to that of the prison, being in fact a prison of objects, arresting time and history.[45] This modern mechanism is then employed by the anti-communist discourse in order to spatialize and literally arrest the display of the Soviet modernity for its own memory politics.

The (Self)-Colonial Functions of the Museum of Communism

The question that needs to be asked here is then for whose gaze the museum of communism displays the past in this dramatic manner? Who is the addressee of the museal framing? In her *A guided tour through the museum of communism*, Slavenka Drakulic imagined a series of fables in which the experience of communism in different countries of the Eastern bloc is retold from the view point of some internationally recognized clichés: the Mangalica pig for Hungary, the stray dog for Romania, the raven for Albania and so on, reminding of Boris Buden's insight that what structures the post-communist discourse with respect to identity formation is the stereotype.[46]

While overall the book rehashes the same self-Orientalizing mechanisms specific to Drakulic's earlier work and to other eastern European accounts of communism in general[47], there is nonetheless a beautiful irony to it. On the one hand the post-communist subjects are demoted to the level of animals telling their story; on the other hand they generate astonishment not because of what they say but because of their very ability to speak. Is not the museum of communism, in its various formats across countries, the very embodiment of this inferiorizing, Orientalizing mechanism? Is not the museum of communism an open acknowledgment of the fact that the only way Eastern Europeans can be integrated into the European experience is by imagining themselves as something so exotic as speaking animals? Is not their identity akin to that of the former aboriginals who managed to impress the westerners not through their act of being, but through some extraordinary bodily features like the big penis, the black skin, the naked body and so on? In post-communism, the extraordinariness that seeks to attract the view of the western foreigners is precisely the horrors of the communist past, the unbelievable scars left by the former regime on the body politic of the nation. The museum of communism cannot be understood

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[44] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive : Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London ; New York: Verso, 1993). pp. 116.

[45] For an ampler discussion, with particular relevance for the relationship between punishment and visual display and exhibition, in a distinctly Nietzschean vein, see of course Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

[46] Slavenka 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). For Buden, see op. cit.

[47] I particularly refer here to Slavenka Drakulić, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (London: Hutchinson, 1992)., Andrei Pleşu, *Despre Bucurie ÎN Est ŞI ÎN Vest, ŞI Alte Eseuri* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2006). But, of course, the list is much longer.

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outside this mechanism of expressing and exhibiting a stigmatic wound, concomitantly as commodity and identity.

Boris Buden was right to note that the museums of communism tell the history of communism from the perspective of a happy-end: the fall of communism and the triumph of capitalism. [48] Moreover, Simina Bădică noted that the museum of communism always places the viewer on the safe side: that of the non- and anti-communist viewer, identifying it with the experience of victimhood that just turns communism into a fearful but defeated monster. [49] This in itself is ironic: post-communist societies, while on the losing side of the Cold War, nonetheless celebrate it as their own victory. Is this not the best example of the power of self-colonization, of fully accepting the terms, language and interpretation of the victors? The visitors of the museum know from the beginning the truth about communism (that it was bad, that it failed, that it brought misery and so on) and as such their experience is only a visible reminder of what they already know or are supposed to know.

The museum of communism plays not only a pedagogical role, but is also highly important as a mechanism for cultural identity formation. Through the museum, the entire traumatic and complex history of communism is pinned down, fixed as an essential cultural identity. What was formerly an attempt at universal emancipation, it is now portrayed as a cultural aberration coming from the East, a Russian imperialism, an Asiatic influence that struck Europe by surprise and against its will.[50] Communism becomes then a "black hole", a blind spot in an interrupted history, "other people's" cultural identity –the Russians- imposed on other countries. As such, anti-communism becomes a racial form of cultural and historical explanation in relation to the past, mobilizing a series of ethnocentric, Eurocentric and imperialist ideologies that depict communism as a barbarian invasion, a foreign civilization that in the end was nonetheless defeated.

Benedict Anderson showed that the European colonial powers used the ethnographic museum as one particular tool to build the collective identity of the people they were colonizing. The museum was at the very same time a mechanism that was supposed to build both identity (fixing, unifying and essentializing the identity of the colonized) and alterity (the different Other, the non-European, the exotic).[51]

Similarly, Eric Wolf noted that in the nationalizing efforts a special role fell to the museums. The private cabinet of curiosities of notables and kings gradually became public institutions over the course of the 19th century exhibiting the national past, in the forward march toward civilization. Museums were also the first institutions to employ anthropologists as both curators and research scholars.[52]

Today it is the museum of communism and the vast networks of global artists and curators that seem to fulfill the role of the national museums of the past and in the

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[48]   Boris   Buden,   The   Place   of   Forgetting,   text   available   here http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1440&lang=en. Retrieved June 16, 2013
[49] Bădică, op. cit.
[50] See also Buden, op. cit.
[51] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London ; New York ;: Verso, 2006).
[52] Wolf and Silverman.pp. 66

process build the identity of the post-communist people in the context of new imperial projects. Charity Scribner noted that one of the most striking trends currently bourgeoning in Europe is the exhibition of communist material culture in museums and galleries. In this process, objects that once had use or exchange values have now an exhibition value. [53] Similarly, Andreas Huysen was right to emphasize the centrality of the cultural practice of exhibition in the contemporary cultural activities:

> Indeed, a museal sensibility seems to be occupying ever-larger chunks of everyday culture and experience. If you think of the historicizing restoration of old urban centers, whole museum villages and landscapes, the boom of flea markets, retro fashions, and nostalgia waves, the obsessive self-musealization per video recorder, memoir writing and confessional literature, and if you add to that the electronic totalization of the world on data banks, then the museum can indeed no longer be described as a single institution with stable and well-drawn boundaries. The museum in this broad amorphous sense has become a key paradigm of contemporary cultural activities.[54]

Dubravka Ugresic circumscribed this centrality of the museum, particularly after 1989 in the networks of US power and knowledge production:

> History, memory, nostalgia, these are concepts in which contemporary America has recognized a high-cultural therapy and, of course, commercial value. The stimulation of the recollection of different ethnic immigrant groups, encouraging the reconstruction of lost identities, opening immigrant museums, establishing chairs at American universities (which, in examining various cultural identities, are concerned with memory), the publishing industry, newspapers and television which readily commercialize the theme—all of this supports the idea of the new American obsession with 'musealization'[55]

In this context, post-communist Eastern Europe, with its excess of memory and cultural talk, perfectly fits a horizon of global and imperial expectations. Post-communism is nothing else than communism reduced to its museal variant, an artifact and a commodity in which relations between people appear as relations between (collectible) things, ready to be displayed. Consequently, museification is not only a mechanism of furthering capitalist relations on the realm of memory, but also an essential form of societal forgetting. To put it differently, the role of the museum of communism is precisely that of obliterating the past, of erasing the memory of communism for an ever-present of capitalist relations of productions and commodity exchange.

Reduced to the level of an exhibited artifact, to a series of agglomerating objects, the communist past becomes also a form of entertainment, derision and laughter. The past

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[53] Charity Scribner, *Requiem for Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).pp. 10
[54] Huyssen.pp. 14.
[55] Dubravka Ugresic, The Confiscation of Memory, *New Left Review* I/218, July-August 1996

appears as a caricature, a time of embarrassment, of abnormality and grotesque. Seen from the perspective of the post-communist present, the communist past appears as an uneasy moment, an accident, something to make fun of and leave behind. Deprecating and ridiculing this communist past imposes itself as a necessary task in order to get rid of it, to eliminate its burden from the present. The past is similar to a defect, a flaw about which is better to make fun yourself instead of suffering the humiliating ridicule of others.

Daphne Berdahl captured the laughter with which the East Germans (Ossie) were welcomed by their Western counterparts after the Wende who poked fun at their monochrome and out-of-fashion clothes, their desperate shopping impulses (especially for porn, an aspect inscribed even in the museum of GDR in Berlin), hopeless lack of savoir-faire in relation to technology and practical utilities and, above all, their utterly ridiculous car –the Trabant.[56] The burst of laughter in relation to the past, far from suggesting an emancipatory gesture in relation to it, signify in fact the interiorization of the Western laughter in relation to their communist past, and with it a series of Western presuppositions, stereotypes and power relations. It is precisely through the internalization of this depreciative laughter, that the Eastern subjects can reconstitute themselves as true Europeans.

Hence, it is in the post-communist East that what Sloterdijk defined as the "*false consciousness of the enlightened consciousness*" acquires its definitive dimensions: cynicism in relation to the past appears both critical and understanding, the mark of an unbridgeable distance.[57] To put it differently, in this mechanism of internalizing the western laughter, we encounter the purest form self-colonization.[58] With it, all other forms of alternatives to the western capitalist modernity are discredited as aberrant and the Western capitalist reality becomes the normality par excellence, the only road for the Easterners to begin a new (blank) page in their history. Consequently, self-colonization functions at two levels: on the one hand it requires the internalization of the western civilizing gaze; on the other it entails a complete erasure of the memory of the past, a tabula rasa of the communist past since everything that comes from there is deemed harmful, criminal, backward and so on.

Still, the complete internalization of the colonial laugher is not enough. It must be practiced in a strident manner, in must be endlessly performed in an almost ritualic manner in front of the Other. Alexander Kiossev noted that the gaze of the Other (of the West, of the Civilized Europe, etc.) towards post-communist Eastern Europe is insensible to nuances, to differences (for example, the constant confusion between Bucharest and Budapest, or between Bulgarians and Romanians).[59] The post-communist countries are always in a competition with each other in order to attract the gaze of the Other (foreign investors, foreign tourists and so on), but also to get rid

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[56] Daphne Berdahl and Matti Bunzl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism : Memory, Consumption, Germany*, New Anthropologies of Europe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).Similar traveling stories accompanied by the ironies, depreciation and laughter of the foreigners have been recorded in many other cases of the Eastern Bloc, especially in relation to the Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and above all, the Russians.

[57] Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[58] For the concept of self-colonization, see Alexander Kiossev, Notes on the Self-Colonizing Cultures, Sofia: Salon Verlag, 1998.

[59] Alexander Kiossev, Gaze and acknowledgment, *Eurozine*, 2006.

of their *indistinction*, of their similarity in relation to other post-communist countries. They are faced with a double process: not only to internalize the Western gaze, but to prove that they did so, to show it in order to be recognized as civilized and as such recognized as different from the rest of the bloc. Basically, all the eastern countries strive to show that they are "normal", that they managed to overcome the negative exceptionality of belonging to a communist history.[60]

But what does being normal entail? For Alexander Kiossev the desire for normality replaced the previous communist utopia of the bright future ahead.[61] In post-communism normality assumed a distinctive anti-utopian implication. Still the desire for normality was itself linked to a "retro-utopian" past: the interwar period, the mythical period of normality, prior to the abnormality of communism, already discussed above.

Prior to 1989 the distinctive mark of belonging to the western world was the conspicuous consumption of western products, such as blue jeans, videocassettes and rock music for which people were ready to pay enormous amounts of money or offer a variety of services. As such, normality (opposed to the communist grim abnormality of shortage) was defined as the unbridled opportunity to shop, the uninhibited desire to accumulate. Or to put it in Kiossev apt formulation: *"the consumption of expensive [Western] goods is by no means the simple and rational satisfaction of egotistic needs: it is the irrational satisfaction of egotistic dreams"*.[62]

This might be then one of the most consistent contributions Eastern European communism brought to the strengthening of global capitalism: the total overlap between consumption and liberty, between capitalism and dissidence. The ability to consume and be part of the post-communist shopping spree of both material and symbolic artifacts has been essential for drawing the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion into the category of citizenship and the nation.[63]

Obviously, this is utterly a class relation: that of the communist middle classes (largely the technical intelligentsia) produced by the very dynamics of the communist regime itself. Furthermore, it is precisely this class that defines the contours of normality in post-communism (western integration, capitalism with a human face, consumption and so on) and also the class that has the political power to pursue its interests.

To conclude, in this chapter I pointed out how memory about the communist past is in fact a highly contentious field of (class) struggle, deeply entangled with struggles in the field of historiography discussed in the previous chapter. On this terrain, dismissing nostalgia as a longing for the communist past enables the anti-communist intellectuals and historians to justify and enact their claims to pedagogy of memory. In so doing, they in fact neutralize people's critical sentiments and disenchantment with the present by framing them as a disease that needs to be cured. This is then the role of the Museum of Communism: to assist in this pedagogy of memory by staging the past as a sum of horrors and killings, instilling a certain sensibility and memory

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[60] Alexander Kiossev, The Oxymoron of Normality, Eurozine, 2008.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] See also a similar point made by Berdahl and Bunzl.

into the visitors. The communist past becomes synonymous with murder and is thus voided by any possibility to offer critical resources for articulating present struggles.

The haunting specter of nostalgia and the desire for the museum of communism emerge at the confluence of a series of class interests specific to the transition period, shaping the terrain of memory and history. But in this confluence another institution is also crucial: the archive of the former secret police and the need to open it and reveal its secrets. A similar logic as the one identified in this chapter seems to inform the anti-communist approach to it: on the one hand the need to come to terms with the past in order to become westerne and civilized, on the other a museal thinking according to which files from the archive need only to be revealed so that they can speak for themselves. To this archive and its attendant processes I turn in the next chapter.

4. The Secret Police Archive and the Writing of History. The Securitate as a Form of Knowledge

In a letter sent to a Romanian cultural weekly, Aurel Tudose - a former political prisoner in the 1950s - recalled how after a harsh interrogation, one of his fellow inmates told his interrogator that he will retract everything he had said and signed during his detention once he will be out and will tell the true story instead. To this, the police officer replied laughingly: *"you bandit, you don't get it, do you: the history will be written based not on what you'll say but on our archives."*[1] Tudose wrote this letter following the publication of the condemnation report in order to show his dissatisfaction that the police officer was ultimately right: the communist past was being written based on the archives produced by the former regime, especially those of the secret police, the Romanian infamous *Securitate*.

In this chapter I explore the centrality of the Securitate archive in writing the history of communism in post-communism. More specifically, I trace the manner in which the files of this archive have been incorporated as data for the writing of history but also as nuggets of truth for passing moral judgments about the communist past. In the first part of the chapter I explore the cult of the occult triggered by the belief that the Securitate archive can reveal the truth about the past and highlight the deeply religious vocabulary that justified this belief. The opening of the Securitate archive was integrally part of the wider class project of institutionalizing *history-as-memory* through a national pedagogy of memory, discussed in the previous two chapters.

In the second part of this chapter I move away from what is actually *in* the archive to an analysis *of* the archive itself. In short, I propose a historical materialist investigation by reading along the archival grain of the Securitate. This allows me to suggest a different interpretation of the Securitate archive. First, far from expressing the symptom of a dictatorial regime obsessed to closely monitoring its citizens Orwell style, the secret police represented in fact the institution through which and the manner in which the Communist Party generated knowledge about reality while also trying to actively shape that reality in accordance with its ideological commitments. As such, the communist secret police archive is inextricably linked to global modern practices of legibility and knowledge, undergirding the making of colonial empires and nation states and their means for controlling and managing the population.

Secondly, and interrelated, I suggest that the secret police was the mechanism that kept in check the class struggle defining the communist societies. Since the technical and humanist intelligentsia was the main competitor of the Party for maintaining its hegemony on knowledge, the role of the secret police was to make sure the intelligentsia would remain at least formally committed to the communist ideology and to the political form of the Party-State. When that did not happen, members of the intelligentsia were expelled from the country as dissidents or spies. I suggest a rethinking of dissident practices during communism by showing how in fact they were enabled by the very structure of the communist regime itself.

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[1] Aurel Tudose, Placerea de a polemiza in vant, *Observator Cultural*, no. 460, February 2009. Text available here, http://www.observatorcultural.ro/PRIMIM-LA-REDACTIE.-Placerea-de-a-polemiza-in-vint*articleID_21183-articles_details.html, accessed 13 March 2013.

Finally, in the third part, in light of these historical investigations, I explore the process of reading one's file in post-communism together with Herta Muller, the 2009 Nobel Prize winner for literature, known for her bleak portrayal of life during Ceaușescu at the hands of the secret police. By reading over her shoulder I discuss the structure of a Securitate file and other broader issues concerning the opening of these files. This practice of reading one's secret police file and writing about it brings again into focus questions about (auto)biography and trauma, constitutive of the anti-communist historiography. Consequently, I argue that the secret police archive is not only a source of writing history but also a very important source for continuing practices of denunciation *after* 1989.

I. Archive Fever in Post-Communism

The Making of the CNSAS Archive

The letter of the disappointed political prisoner quoted above points at once to a very heated debate in post-communism: how to approach the archives left behind by the former regime, particularly that of its feared and despised institution, the Securitate. This concern with archives, as sources and objects of research, constitute a contentious site in which issues regarding the past, history writing, memory, representation, voices and silence, justice and truth, institutional arrangements and power struggles, political interests and academic agendas coalesce and interact.

These complex social interactions reveal a social arena fraught with contradictions, struggles and trauma both before and after the 1989 divide. Moreover, they bespeak a concern not only with what is *in* the archives but also *of* the archives themselves, as sources of fear, angst and danger, or on the contrary, of truth, knowledge and revelation. The archives not only delineate a social terrain in which legacies of the past are intensely fought over in the present, shaping it, but also create a social space in which the present has the power to retrospectively determine the past. As such, they are at the very core of the "transition" changes and challenges.

Moreover, the archives of the former communist state pose specific problems. The immediate concern was their proverbial unreliability. Not only that the state institutions of the former regime tended to report and record a different reality, especially when falling behind the requirements of the Plan, but also even the genuine records were not immutable to later alterations either. In addition, the post-communist legislation governing the access to these documents was hazy, full of loopholes and politically motivated that for a long time precluded any meaningful access. In short, some documents are still under key because of legal provisions, some are missing and some have been destroyed, while others have been abandoned in dilapidated factories when they were closed.

In this context, the archive of the former Securitate is a special case in point. While the bulk of the information contained in these files was largely gathered through surveillance, (forced) confession and denunciation and generally through a series of practices that involved at a minimum a blunt display of police and state power, their secrecy during the communist rule made them powerful objects of desire in post-communism.

Despite, or rather precisely because of its problematic history of making, the Securitate archive was considered a privileged place to generate truth and knowledge

about the past. After 1989, a number of prominent anti-communist intellectuals and former dissidents asked for the full opening of these archives.[2] Some of them even actively sought positions within the state institution devised to administer these archives.[3] One of the underpinning arguments for this mobilization was that these archives could clear the air of the transition period and could draw a line between the victims and the perpetrators, offering the grounds for "transitional justice", lustration and reparation.

The ideal model for this operation was, of course, the opening of the STASI archive and its attendant research institutions. By and large this was a goal shared across the former communist bloc, but not unanimously and hardly unequivocally.[4] For example, Adam Michnik claimed that the archives of the former secret police should be kept locked (and with them their demons) and replaced instead with actions of social forgiveness and reconciliation.[5]

By contrast, the Romanian anti-communist intellectuals continuously argued for the need to know the perpetrators in order to bring them to justice. To this end, the National Council for the Study of the former Securitate Archives (hereafter CNSAS) was formed in 1999, following the initiative of Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu, a former political prisoner. The Council had a mandate to study the Securitate files in order to identify the informers, the collaborators and those in charge of "political police" and other forms of communist repression.[6] While the discoveries of the CNSAS collegium had no direct legal bearings, people identified in those capacities could be prevented from holding public offices or forced to resign from their positions.[7]

The law also raised some important stumbling blocks, which, as many of the supporters of the institution claimed, watered down its purpose. Most importantly perhaps, the law stipulated that the files of the former Securitate had to be vetted by a mixed commission in order to identify and continue to keep secret those files deemed important for the national security. Only then the remaining of the files were transferred to CNSAS and that with significant delays and obstacles because the institution lacked both the space and technology to properly manage these files.[8]

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[2] For a good overview of these arguments, see Cosmina Tanasoiu. Intellectuals and Post-Communist Politics in Romania: An Analysis of Public Discourse, 1990_2000 *East European Politics and Societies* 2008; 22; 80

[3] Andrei Pleşu, Horia Roman Patapievici and Mircea Dinescu were members in the first Council of CNSAS.

[4] Stan, op. cit.

[5] Adam Michnik, *Mărturisirile unui dizident convertit* [The Confessions of a Converted Dissident], (Iaşi: Polirom, 2009). pp. 98

[6] There is no good analysis of this institution. For a good attempt that integrates historical data and a critical perspective, see Gabriel Andreescu, *Cărturari, opozanţi şi documente. Manipularea arhivei securităţii* (Iaşi:Polirom, 2013).

[7] However, in 2008 following protracted legal battles too complex to detail here, CNSAS's activity was restricted. After the new law, people belonging to the top echelon of the Romanian Communist Party were exempted from being verified by CNSAS. Similarly, the members of the Orthodox Church could be verified only if the Church made a specific request. To put in plain words, CNSAS was now able to catch only small fry.

[8] The mixed commission in charge of the vetting was formed by representatives of CNSAS and by representatives of the SRI (Romanian Intelligence Service), the legal owners of the archive after 1989. Surely, there is a touch of irony here pointed out several times: since SRI was the de facto heir of the

Thus, the archive that is now in the custody of CNSAS, and usually referred to as the Securitate archive, is in fact the product of a particular political decision, of a particular selection, historically and ideologically circumscribed. Far from representing *the* archive of the former secret police, it represents in fact the outcome of *a* political decision and political compromise made during the "transition" period. In addition, prior to 1989 the files of the former Securitate were scattered around various bureaus, branches and institutions across the country without a rigorous or centralized tabulation. During and after the 1989 events, a series of documents disappeared or were accidentally or purposefully destroyed. The files that belong now to the CNSAS are just a part, a fragment from a whole, whose size is actually hard to determine, if not completely impossible.

By law, CNSAS comprises 11 members nominated by parliamentary parties and the president for a six-year mandate. Unsurprisingly, then, CNSAS was constantly mired in controversy ever since its inception and the activity of the institution routinely blocked by successive waves of resignations, new appointments, internal frictions and accusations. While these politically-motivated games hampered and discredited to a large extent the main activity of the institution, the research and archival work was notable and led to a series of useful publications, including a detailed annual report. Yet, because the institution employs a number of historians for its own research purposes, other scholars have decried their obvious advantage in terms of access to files.[9] Many voices asked not only for a more democratic access to the files but also for an end to the monopoly of the CNSAS over the archive, demanding its full digitalization and publication on-line. This shows how entrenched the political and research positions in relation to the archive have been but also how coveted these files are as sources for the writing of the communist history.

The archives of the communist state are socially constituted at the meeting point of the communist archival practices, post-communist political struggles and historiographical practices, local and western in nature. This intersection necessarily creates frictions, hierarchies, struggles and competition for privileged access, exclusivity to content and monopoly over interpretation. In short, it engenders a historiographical battle over the past and its artifacts aimed to ensure privileged access to that past. In the next section, I examine three main strategies employed for accessing –and justifying this access – to the Securitate archive specific mainly to the Romanian anti-communist historiography but, as I try to show through different examples, also informing global historiographical practices about the communist past.

Three Entries into the Goldmine

1."The truth is out there": the historian as priest

The underlining thinking behind the existence of an institution like CNSAS was rooted in the liberal belief that the documents of the former Securitate have a special status among other archival sources because they can generate "truth" about the

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Securitate, the notion of "national interest" was vague enough to cover a series of situations that best suited the current officers.

[9] As many signed petitions circulated on the internet by young researchers and historians claim, the access to the CNSAS archive is biased. Some well-known local figures and foreign research receive preferential treatment, while others need to wait for months and years to get the files they requested.

communist past, and more specifically about people's choices and moral stances.[10] The impetus to open the Securitate archive was formulated in the jargon of Christian theology, pertaining to issues of "guilt", "redemption", "confession", "sin", "moral rectitude", "forgiveness", "victims and perpetrators", etc. It was hoped that the "revelations" of the files would tell the truth about everyone's past. Put differently, people carried a different degree of fault for the past, a different burden as it were, and this difference had to be inscribed into the new order of the society.

This expectation of "revelation" bespeaks a vision of history in which meaning can potentially erupt at any moment to shake the foundations of our world. To put it in Freudian terms, the Securitate archive seems to be the place of the *unheimlich* (the uncanny), a strange collection of documents that can at any moment alter our sense of "identity" and "self". The historians dealing with the *mana* of the archive effectively seem to play the role of high priests, performing complicated forms of divination to allow for that meaning to manifest itself. But far from representing a relapse into some ancient practices, this historiographical approach to the archive is utterly modern. Jules Michelet, the founder of modern historiography also understood the task of the historian to be that of pacifying the spirits of the dead, exorcising them, by finding the meaning of their brief existences.[11] The intellectual and the historian assume in this paradigm the function of a national priest, offering forgiveness, love and understanding, thus mediating between victims and perpetrators, and generally assuming a position of responsibility for healing the nation.

Because of being endowed with the capacity to reveal truth, the secret police archive in Romania had a similar role to that of WikiLeaks in the west: a vast spectacle of information and "scandal" played out on the front pages of the newspapers and on television, each time promising yet a bigger revelation and a more complex web of spies, interests and victims. From politicians to writers, from artists to sportsmen, from business people to poor scientists few people escaped unscathed by this concoct of data, rumors, allusions, suggestions and presuppositions, all extracted from files. All of a sudden, and at regular intervals, everybody could potentially become a "Stranger", somebody with a different identity, a different history and a different past.

This mechanism was amplified once the CNSAS archive was properly opened and people could read their own files, discovering, in a truly melodramatic reversal, not necessarily the secret about themselves, but about the "Other": their relatives, close friends and neighbors doing the spying. While these random forms of denunciation and unmasking might be considered symptoms of the societal failure of the lustration process, they nonetheless dovetail a similar religious vision of the archive, capable to generate truth and to reveal the real about the people.

However, in a purely dialectical reversal, this fascination with truth and purification led to the proliferation of a widespread climate of suspicion, fear and denunciation, that is, precisely of what the former Securitate was mainly blamed for and the lustration mechanisms were hoping to eliminate from the public life of post-

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[10] Surely, this is not only a phenomenon specific to post-communist Romania. In his Arrested Voices, Vitaly Shentalinsky writes: "*There, at the Lubyanka, is hidden the truth about the life and death of our best writers*" (pp. 3). Vitaliĭ Shentalinskiĭ, *Arrested Voices : Resurrecting the Disappeared Writers of the Soviet Regime* (New York: Martin Kessler Books, Free Press, 1996).
[11] Quoted in Steedman and Rutgers University Press., pp. 71.

communism.[12] By inscribing the Securitate files as sites of truth about the past, post-communism simply prolonged its logic into the present. One notable such effect was the strengthening of a *cult for the occult and secrecy*, itself already an obsession of the former Securitate and its main *raison d'etre*: finding secrets (held by enemies of the state, dissidents, etc.) and keeping secrets (through files, surveillance, and the like).

In his seminal piece on secrecy, Georg Simmel linked the fascination with secrets to money, and generally to the birth of the modern world.[13] In post-communism, this link became almost literal: secrets collected from the secret police archive were often exchanged for money. Their secrecy was further prolonged through occult pecuniary transactions. The revelations of the files inaugurated an occult economy of secrets and money that mirrored other, larger, similar transformations of the state and the economy: dubious privatizations, accumulation by dispossession, enclosures and expropriations. Consequently, the files rapidly turned into sources for generating capital, or for preventing people, through blackmail with their files, from having access to capital. This overlapping between secret police files and money further reinforced the popular image of the former secret police agents as wealthy people capable to buy out their impunity and being the main puppeteers and beneficiaries of the 1989 transformations.

Far from being an unintended consequence of the opening of the archive, these shadowy transactions with files and information were in fact made possible by the religious belief in the truth allegedly contained by these archives, just like the buying of indulgences was constitutive of, not external to, the Catholic Church. In this context, it is little wonder that one of the first truly popular TV series arresting the local post-communist imagination was "*The X Files*". Not only the claim of the series that "*the truth is out there*" perfectly fitted the post-communist sensibilities, but also the heroic figure of the young agent Mulder fighting secretive spooks in order to unveil terrifying governmental conspiracies expressed the aspirations of many historians, journalists and anti-corruption fighters, in search of the former communist agents still pulling the strings or at least hiding, like the "aliens", among innocent and unsuspecting people.

The series was the perfect popular culture version of the liberal explanation of the transition failures: the conspiracy theory plotted by former secret agents. Similarly, just like agent Mulder, post-communist ghost-hunters shared a similar preoccupation for the occult, the mystical and the religious, solidifying forms of voodoo politics and history, specific to highly disruptive and contentious transitional moments not only in post-communist Eastern Europe but also, for example, in post-apartheid South Africa.[14]

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[12] On this point see also Barbu.

[13] Georg Simel, The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies *American Journal of Sociology* 11 (1906): 441-498.

[14] See John and Jane Comaroff, Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. *Public Culture*, 12(2): 291-343.

2. From documents to monuments: the historian as judge

The transactions with secrecy, rooted in a priestly search for truth, point to another important relationship between secrets, files and truth: that of hidden and forbidden *knowledge*. This desire for secret knowledge, and, in Foucauldian terms, the power that comes with it, was a driving force throughout the "transition" period and inspired not only professional traders of secrets but also anti-communist historians as well. Note this example. In *Stalinism for all Seasons* Vladimir Tismăneanu made the following remark in the acknowledgments:

> I was also helped in 1994 in Romania by Ioan Scurtu (director of the State Archives), Virgil Magureanu (director of the Romanian Service of Information [SRI]), Ioan Mircea Pascu (secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence), Mihai Bujor Sion (minister counselor of the Romanian Embassy in Washington) and General Dumitru Cioflina (the Romanian Army's chief of staff). It is to their credit that, our political disagreements notwithstanding, they made it possible for me to have access to restricted party archives.[15]

In the post-communist context this intimate relationship with power and the opaque is not something external to the research but precisely what constitutes it. As it were, gaining access to restricted materials and cached documents is not necessarily the precondition for scholarship, but scholarship itself. Knowledge is not based necessarily on interpretation involving analytical skills, but on revelation of a secret, involving political connections.

A similar situation occurred during the working of the condemnation commission: members and experts of the commission were granted temporary privileged access to restricted materials in order to perform their work for the report, at the expense of other scholars who were less lucky. The point here is not necessarily that the secrecy of the documents create and entertain this desire for hidden knowledge, but precisely that unequal and privileged access to archives gives immense power and social recognition to those possessing the secret. Consequently, the search for truth, and for its redemptive possibility, is necessarily interlocked with the fascination for secrecy and the knowledge-power it bestows to those possessing it.

Jeff Sahadeo described the process of opening the archives of the Communist Party in Uzbekistan as an opportunity to research exotic aspects about USSR communism.[16] In his piece, the archives are instrumentalized not only as sources of truth about the past, but also as scarce commodities on the academic market. Of course, what renders scarce such resources is the limited access granted to them by local political leaders. Therefore, the more closed a society is –"undemocratic" in the parlance of the transition NGOs and of some academics – the more appeal its archives have to the historians. Researching in such exotic places always bears the promise of having access to some really exotic archives, to some really inaccessible sources of

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[15] Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons : A Political History of Romanian Communism*. University of California Press, 2003, pp. xi

[16] Jeff Sahadeo, Without the Past there is No Future. Archives, History and Authority in Uzbekistan, In Antoinette M. Burton, *Archive Stories : Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005). pp. 58-59.

knowledge. The writing of history after 1989 cannot be separated from this archival economy and the global hierarchies it nests.

Sahadeo's piece is also illustrative for the sometimes condescending, almost colonial way, in which foreign historians and researchers descend on the archives in the periphery. The poverty of the Uzbek country is reflected on the crumbling archival infrastructure that makes access difficult and time consuming in contrast, it is understood implicitly, to the way western archives function. But the impossible becomes possible with a strategically placed bribe, denoting a savoir of the local economy of favors. In the process, the local historians and intellectuals, allegedly castrated of their auctorial voices by the authoritarian regimes in power, play the role of intermediaries and facilitators, providing the western historian with access to rich material in exchange for a small sum of money and, for the luckier ones, a faint gesture of praise in a footnote. Western historians, as Sahadeo seems to suggest, are not writing history and selfishly fostering their careers, but are in fact saving the files from destruction and from the monopoly of closed regimes, by bringing them to light. But this overlapping of imperialism and humanitarian reasoning on the terrain of historiography in relation to the archive is perhaps best described by Jonathan Brent's *Inside Stalin's Archive*, which documents the effort of salvaging Stalin's archive from the grasp of usually half-drunken bureaucrats while justifying the process as part of a larger attempt at helping the Russian people to come to terms with their traumatic past and unclear futures.[17]

In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michael Foucault described the transition from a traditional form of history that sought to memorize the *monuments* of the past ("*to transform them into documents*"), to a contemporary form of history "*that transforms documents into monuments*".[18] If the former tried to give voice to the documents, the new history aspires to the condition of archeology, aiming to offer an intrinsic description of the monument. Foucauldian archeology is not interested in what documents mean, in what they say as discreet and silent traces of the past, but rather it "*…organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations…*"[19]

Foucault's notorious vagueness not only renders his work vulnerable to precise questions and particular examples but also opens it up to a series of unexpected and perhaps unintended readings. For example, it is striking to note that what Foucault calls archeology perfectly describes the manner in which the files of the former secret police have been generally read by anti-communist historians: not as documents, as fragments of the past with their own history of making that needs to be traced back and understood, but as monuments of the past that simply need to be archeologically brought to light in order for them to speak directly, unambiguously for themselves.[20]

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[17] Jonathan Brent, *Inside Stalin's Archive. Discovering the New Russia* (London: Atlas, 2008).

[18] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).pp. 6

[19]Ibid., pp. 7

[20] For an exemplary case of how Foucault's writings have been used for reading and understanding the Securitate files, see Cristina Anisescu, Interpretarea unui text-document din perspectiva psihanalizei aplicate in *Pseudomemoriile unui general de Securitate*. (București: Humanitas, 2007). Foucault is usually the preferred theoretical source for the anti-communist reading of the secret police files.

This belief in the archeological value of the files as monuments of the past seems to sustain the idea of "revelation", of direct communication of truth. Not surprisingly then an entire vocabulary pertaining to archeology has been common to the language of anti-communist historiography as well, especially in relation to archival sources, such as "digging", "unearthing", "bringing to light", "unburying" and so on.

This transformation of the secret police files from documents into monuments not only shaped the historical discourse and epistemic imagination of anti-communism but at the same time also laid the grounds for the de-historicization and subsequent memorialization of the past. As monuments, these files have been bestowed with intrinsic value as exemplary objects, and as such they needed to be preserved, catalogued and even exposed. Just like pieces of the past exhibited in a museum, these files too were envisaged as relics, capable to offer an authoritative account of the past. No wonder that a common editorial practice of post-communist historiography was the publishing of "raw" collection of documents from the archives. As such, these files were deemed capable to speak for themselves, through themselves, transparently and unequivocally.[21] Consequently, the historians of communism working in the archive played in fact a role similar to that of curators in the museum of communism: exhibiting and displaying took precedence over interpretation and construction of historical explanations. In fact, in many instances, the opening of the secret police archive is inseparable from the opening of a museum of that institution.[22]

The way the Securitate archives were incorporated as sources into the anti-communist historiography recalls Derrida's description of the "archive fever".[23] In his influential piece, Derrida shows how the origin of the modern concept of the archive points in fact to a physical location, a "domiciliation": the house of the archons, of the high magistrates. The archons not only ensure the physical security of the documents but they are also accorded hermeneutic rights and competences. Just like present-day historians working for the CNSAS for example, the archons also have the power to interpret the archives. But entrusted to the archons, to the representatives of power, the documents in their "house arrest" as Derrida nicely puts it, speak the law. Put differently, the documents are authorized by and in turn authorize, in a circular movement, the exercise of power and of law. Derrida emphasizes further, the science of the archive must necessarily incorporate a theory of its institutionalization: that is, of its authorization, of its investment with law-making effects.

Surely, compared to other archives, the Securitate archive is a special place since already in its inception it was quintessentially a place of law and power that could be used with various punitive effects. Precisely at this level of using the Securitate archives as historical sources we encounter again the overlap between "truth" and "knowledge", between justice and historiographical research already discussed in relation to the condemnation report in the previous chapters.

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[21] Some of these selections are very good, both in terms of content but also regarding the themes (unions, the church, intellectuals, trial transcripts from the 1950s and so on). This way of publishing them I think helps to understand the historical nature of making these documents, both before and after 1989, especially the way in which they were editorialized. Surely, it also raises the moral question why would they be commercially available if they are state owned.

[22] The example here is also STASI.

[23] Derrida. For a critical commentary see Steedman and Rutgers University Press..

Anti-communist historiography, most of it highly influenced by and deriving from the work of the priestly intellectuals and historians, retains that religious core to which it adds a powerful quest for justice. The secret files, just like before 1989, become instruments for indictment, for passing moral and historical judgments. Hence, the "domiciliation" of the archive takes the dual form of both temple and court. The historian takes the role of the judge through which truth and law are expressed and accomplished. To put it again in Derrida's terms, the archive is by necessity a place of violence, not only of state power over the historian (who assumes the punitive power of the state), but also the violence of the past over the present.

The condemnation report is then just the most articulated example of this "punitive reason", explicitly designed to deliver both the truth and the justice. Consequently, archive violence, through its punitive effects, creates new categories of exclusions, altering the boundaries of belonging and respectability in the new post-communist context based on the material produced by the former secret police. Just like the search for truth creates a parallel economy of secrecy and deception, the quest for justice perpetuates in the present the injustices perpetrated by the secret police itself.

3. Clues in excess: the historian as inquisitor

In his influential *Silencing the Past* Michel-Rolph Trouillot showed that the making of the archives necessary presupposes a number of selective operations, especially of the producers, of what constitutes the proper evidence, of relevant themes, of methods and archival procedures deemed suitable for being archived. [24] Any archive is not only the sum of recorded documents, but also the sum of silences, of what is not being there, of what has been occluded, repressed and disregarded.

Trouillot further notes in a markedly Foucauldian manner, that the archive not only organizes and catalogues documents but also offers the condition of possibility for the formulation of historical statements. Access to the archive, being privy to its content and its secrets is what separates a historian from a charlatan, a specialist from an amateur. Thus, the archive functions as the law, but also as the law of the historians' métier, its source of power and legitimation. Furthermore, the archives are the "*institutionalized sites of mediation between the sociohistorical process and the narrative about the process…Archives help select the stories that matter*".[25] But how does this relate to the concrete case of the Securitate archive?

The first point to be noted here is that in the making of the Securitate archive there are already two levels of "silences". The first level is the standard one described by Trouillot that necessarily defines the making of any archive in the process of selection and recording, stemming from the fact that there is always an ontological gap between the historical event and its recording in which power of preservation and documentation inserts itself. The second level, however, concerns the fact that the Securitate archive was created by and against the silences of the population being monitored. As it were, the role of the Securitate archive was to record everything that was being kept silent by the population in relation to the political power (be it intimate conversations, plots for dissident acts or simple mundane interactions).

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[24] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995).pp. 53.
[25] Ibid., pp. 52.

In the case of the Securitate archive the dialectics between recording and silencing is further complicated by the dialectic between *de-silencing* and recording. In this case, leaving things out of the archive, omitting them, might not be a sign of the power of selection, but a sign of the lack of power, of its incapacity to record everything. Cristina Vatulescu already showed how the Securitate aimed to record *everything*, to put everything into their files concerning the cases they were following.[26] The task of the historian might not necessarily be that of navigating and making sense of the silences inherent in the archives (or to put it differently, to historicize its gaps and selections), but to understand and deal with its loquacity.

Another important difference between a regular archive and that of the Securitate concerns the generating effects of the dialectics between omission and inclusion. In the case of a standard archive, those whose voices, experiences and even existence have been obscured by official recordings (women in the history of men, black populations in the triumphant histories of colonialism and conquest, etc.) have generally constructed their own forms of archives (be it in parallel archival institutions, or through other media like literature, songs or the body). Theirs was an attempt to fight erasure, to resist obliteration and forgetting. In the case of the Securitate archive, the relationship is reversed: people included in it have always felt the need to justify themselves, to give an account of this inclusion (either as "perpetrators", or as "victims"), or as suggested above, to erase this inclusion, to make it disappear. Consequently, the Securitate archive is inseparable from an ever-growing body of confessional literature that offers justification, clarification and contextualization for the *inclusion* in the archive, to which I will return below.

In his well-known study, *Clues: Roots of an evidential paradigm*, Carlo Ginzburg evokes the "Morelli method", named after its inventor Giovanni Morelli, who became famous in the art world of the second half of the 19th century because it helped to determine the authorship of a series of paintings exhibited in European museums.[27] The method consists of a very close look to the small and apparently insignificant details of a painting. Ginzburg links this type of meticulous reading to the investigative method developed (almost simultaneously) by Arthur Conan Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes novels and even to Freud's later exploration of the unconscious by way of a careful consideration of apparently banal and unimportant elements of the psychic life. The common thread here is the belief that these traces permit the comprehension of a reality that, glanced through the traditional tools, will remain obscured. But, as Ginzburg notes, this fascination with clues and traces cannot be separated from a parallel history developing in modernity that ultimately led to the discovery of fingerprints by Galton in 1888 and to the eventual creation of a database based on this traces with the purpose of keeping track of criminal recidivists.

The historian's practice of looking for small clues, traces and hidden indices cannot be separated at the level of method from that of the policemen carefully scrutinizing a trace in the form of a fingerprint or a shoe-print, Sherlock Holmes being here the most obvious link. But do we not encounter in the case of the Securitate archive a similar

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[26] Vatulescu.

[27] Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

overlapping? Is not the historian who is reading these files acting like a detective, looking for clues, for connections, for traces leading from one file to the next, from one character to the next, from one plot to the next, in the process asking questions and demanding answers? Is not the historian actually doing exactly the same type of job a regular Securitate agent was doing when compiling these files? Does not the post-communist historian follow a path initially opened up by the Securitate agent? Therefore the historian also becomes an inquisitor, a detective.

In *Inquisitor as Anthropologist*, Ginzburg compared the judicial proceedings of courts with the notes of an anthropologist and examined the implication of this similarity for the work of a historian in the archives of another ill-reputed secret police –the Inquisition. Ginzburg noted that the inquisitorial records, particularly concerning the witchcraft, only slowly became popular among professional historians, so that when he was granted access to an archive of 2000 trials he was as thrilled as if he was in the possession of an "unexplored gold mine". In post-communism the Securitate files also went through a similar alchemic transubstantiation: from "shit" (unwanted remains of the brutality of the former regime, unable to say anything about the past) to "gold" (highly important documents that can reveal information about the workings of power, and so on).

Consequently, there is an obvious similarity between the historian reading the files of the Inquisition and the historian reading the files of the Securitate archive: they both look over the shoulder of the inquisitor and of the *securist*, respectively. Moreover, both the inquisitor's and the Securitate agent's urge for "truth" and "confession" has produced, among other supporting data and techniques, the very rich evidence constituting the core of the respective archives and the goldmines the historians now use for their investigations.

Romanian historian Marius Oprea is here a case in point. His relentless pursuit of the Securitate agents and of their communist crimes earned him a considerable amount of fame and recognition so much so that he became known as the "*securisti hunter*". His writings could be best described as police-like biographies of former Securitate employees. There, Oprea traced their overlapping and nefarious trajectories across the 1989 divide. Using a variety of documents, some also cached, Oprea sought to reconstitute in critical details a vast apparatus of secret police agents and their political and economic networks, trying to prove correct the view that the Romanian post-communist society was monopolized by the former *securisti* who benefited from their former privileged positions and connections and are responsible for the generalized corruption of the country in post-communism.

Because of their focus and methodology, Oprea's writings went well beyond the circle of professional scholarship and into political matters, publicly announcing the unmasking of former agents and asking for their lustration.[28] But this homology between the historian and the inquisitor is also explicitly assumed by Timothy Garton Ash in his investigations of the former police officers in charge of his surveillance while he lived in the GDR: He writes:

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[28] For a good summary of Oprea's positions see http://www.observatorcultural.ro/A-venit-vremea-sa-i-stim-pe-toti-cei-care-au-avut-legaturi-cu-Securitatea.-Interviu-cu-Marius-OPREA*articleID_15731-articles_details.html. Retrieved March 15, 2013.

> Later I get their personnel files, which contain more details about their family background, recruitment, career and any disciplinary actions against them. Gradually, like a detective, I build up a mental picture of them and begin to track them down.[29]

It seems then that every anti-communist historian in post-communism has the temptation of becoming a hunter of the secret police officers, an inquisitor and a detective. In fact, this dovetails a strong form of identification with the work of the police officers, a hidden desire for their access and mastery of secrets and details about informants' lives. Surely, in the case of some of the anti-communist intellectuals there was something neurotic in their desire to wear the coat of their old followers, to become like the secret police officers themselves. But more generally, this desire does indeed bespeak an ingrained fantasy at the core of historiography (and anthropology) as modern discipline and form of knowledge: the desire to know everything, to have access not to the visible, but to the invisible, to the hidden secrets and to people's confessions. There is something in the method of investigation itself that casts the historian in the role of a detective of the past, rather solving a mystery and not simply offering an interpretation. Jacques Rancier was perhaps right to note that the modern study of history is in fact a constant search for the latent, a constant struggle to breaking an enigma, a vast process of uncovering and of rendering visible based on some small clues, data and information that one has to bring carefully and patiently together.[30] Ultimately, the historian is a secret agent from the future, spying on the past that is locked into the archives.

But Carolyn Steedman wrote that the archive is also a place of dreams: a place where the historians enter hoping, dreaming, to bring to life something which ceased to exist.[31] Steedman also evokes the founding figure of Michelet who, working in the solitude of the archive, was trying to piece together details and clues of the past in narrative form, to give life to what was lying dead and buried in the dryness of the files and registers. In so doing, the historian resembles less the omniscient figure of the Grand Narrator constructed by post-modernism, writing his (usually a man) authoritative account, but more that of the flaneur, wandering, sometimes with a clear plan, sometimes serendipitously, across bundles of files, registers, dossiers and catalogues. In the process, the historian must remain inquisitive, attentive and on the spot while piercing through silences, secrets, forgotten stories and generally through a myriad of disparate fragments of life. Consequently, the historian is *par excellence* the unintended reader of all that, the intruder, the disturbing element, reading something that was not intended for his/her eyes. Steedman puts it beautifully:

> Like Michelet in the 1820s, the Historian always reads the fragmented written traces of something else, and in the long, whispering gallery must forever be a reader unimagined by the justices' clerk, the examining magistrate, the census enumerator or the guardian of the poor, who made those more-or-less legible registers, and lists and

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[29] Timothy Garton Ash, *The File : A Personal History*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).pp. 171.
[30] Rancière.
[31] Steedman.

observations. The Historian always reads an unintended, purloined letter.[32]

The historian-inquisitor by following in the footsteps of the policemen is also reading something that was not intended for his/her eyes. The metaphor of the purloined letter, which recalls Poe's detective story prefiguring the genre, is in this case befitting: the files of the Securitate archive consist largely of smuggled letters, fragments of secretly recorded conversations, transcripts of pieces of dialogue, surveillance files and denunciations. These were gathered in secrecy and were meant to remain bounded in secrecy. The historian becomes then the detective, the inquisitive presence asking questions, opening files, connecting them, rearranging them, bringing to life forgotten stories, bizarre characters and overlapping pasts.

In *Freud and Philosophy*, Paul Ricoeur identified two hermeneutic strategies: to be suspicious and to be willing to listen.[33] These attitudes presuppose opposing images of the world and of the interpreting subject. In the first case, the world is seen as conflictual and the meaning of each phenomenon is seen as complex and multilayered. In the second instance, the world appears to be the product of emanation, its meaning can be grasped only by allowing its essence to manifest itself freely, or as Franco Moretti has put it, any attempt at a strong interpretation, runs the risk of troubling this epiphany of meaning: it will be seen as an arbitrary act −as prejudice.[34] I believe we encounter here precisely the two main strategies, the two attitudes developed in relation to the Securitate archive: on the one hand the suspicious attitude of the inquisitive historian, willing to question everything, and on the other hand, that of the historian as priest and judge, simply allowing, making possible for the essence of the files to manifest themselves.

But despite their internal differences all three figures of the historians depicted here remain nonetheless within the ideological horizon of the secret police: on the one hand, an overall metaphysics of suspicion, on the other a belief in the immanence of truth and its revelation. In his *Philosophy of History* Hegel made the precise point that it is the state that presents the subject matter already adapted to the writing of history (through its archive and other forms of manifestation) while also actually creating the very history "*in the process of its own being*". To put it differently, the state is the one that makes history while also creating, in this very process, the very categories, institutions, practices and professionals of writing its history. Is this not the exact same mechanism in relation to the Communist state and its most feared archive? The communist state not only created history but also is now actively shaping its writing in post-communism.

What all the three figures mentioned here have in common is that they are all of historians working *in* the archive. The task seems to be then to break the link between state power and history writing, germane for modern history writing and for post-communism in particular, and to find ways to historicize the archive itself as a source

[32] Ibid, pp. 75.

[33] Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy; an Essay on Interpretation*, The Terry Lectures (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1970).

[34] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World : The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987).

of data. To put it differently, the task seems to be to offer a metahistory *of* the archive and archival thinking itself. To that I know turn in the next section.

II. Securitate: knowledge, science and modernity

Theoretical and Methodological State Apparatuses

What does it mean to analyze the archive as a *form* of knowledge and not simply as a *source* of knowledge? Ann Stoler suggested that a good starting point is to read along the archival grain.[35] As such, the archives have to be understood from the perspective of the state and its bureaucratic creators in contrast to the typical academic reading of such archives, either of the colonial administrations, or, recently, of the communist secret police that tries to subvert them by employing a perspective of the natives or of the victims, respectively. Stoler is then right to point out that while a reading against the grain might have powerful counterhegemonic effects, it also runs the risk of seeing the state as homogeneous, bounded, ordered and with a clear purpose at the expense of administrative tentativeness, flux, internal splits, contradictions and even chaos.

This observation is relevant for the Securitate archive as well. Anti-communism has portrayed this institution as all-powerful and omniscient, the real backbone of the communist regime's repressive and totalitarian nature. In so doing, it simply prolonged the image the Securitate was constructing about itself in order to augment its hallow of power. Moreover, such a view precludes a meaningful understanding of the actual functioning of the institution, especially of its historicity and actual embedding in the wider structure of the communist regime and ideology.

By contrast, I take a different view and regard it as an epistemic form through which the state was gathering knowledge about reality, while it also performatively sought to create reality in keeping with its ideological presuppositions. The Securitate was not necessarily only a tool of control, suppression and violence, but also a productive site. It generated knowledge accumulated in the files we read today, but also in other various institutional practices and dynamics, legal provisions and emotional and bodily dispositions, which generally tend to remain opaque due to the textualist focus on files and their factual content.

More generally, then, I suggest that the Securitate was in fact a form of (social) science deployed by the state in relation to its subjects. Just as any instrument of knowledge, the work of the Securitate was not simply descriptive but also, in the process, it aimed to shape its very object of inquiry. The Securitate agents played an active role in the process of turning poor peasants into proletarians, specific to the communist developmentalist logic, a process not unlike that of turning peasants into Frenchmen described by Eugen Weber.[36] Consequently, the Securitate was one of the institutions, central no doubt, through which the Romanian communist state sought to define and protect its own, new, version of reality and social order. From this perspective, far from being an outcome of the communist power, the secret police was what constituted that power to define and bring into being a new reality.

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[35] Stoler.

[36] Gail Klingman and Katherine Verdery described how the Securitate agents actively participated in the process of pursuing Romanian peasants to join the collective farms after communist take-over, in Kligman and Verdery.

The Bolshevik secret police, the CEKA was established immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, with the defensive goal of protecting the revolution from its many internal and external enemies. But its roots run deeper. In *The Russian Revolution*, Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote that the tsarist regime put in place a secret police after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881[37], thus building on Richard Pipes's *Russia Under the Old Regime*.[38] Many Bolsheviks revolutionaries had direct contact with this tsarist secret police during their underground and exile years. They were constantly harassed by it, intimidated and learned how to trick it through the romantic mechanism of disguise, still possible in a world far away from sophisticated data bases and profiling techniques. The strict internal discipline of the underground Bolshevik party was also premised upon the need to keep agents of the tsarist secret police from infiltrating its ranks, something that was not always successful. Following this interaction, the Bolsheviks developed a certain habitus that would guide their actions after taking power, especially in the first years of War communism and Civil War. Exposing internal enemies would remain a constant task for all communist regimes.

While the establishment of the tsarist secret police responded to very palpable needs of the state to deal with increasing anti-systemic and revolutionary movements from the late 1870s onwards, it was hardly a Russian phenomenon. Following the 1815 Vienna congress that reorganized Europe after the Napoleonic wars, the secret police was a bourgeoning institution across Europe, with a view to deter other European nations to upset the balance of power on the continent. States wanted to know beforehand about other states' planned actions in order to counter them. So began a golden age of European espionage, using mainly infiltrated agents, travelers and diplomatic personnel.[39]

As such, the secret police was an integral part of the larger modern principles of surveillance and policing developing from mid 18th centuries onwards. Jeremy Bentham's ideas, famously analyzed by Michael Foucault, signaled a wider change in the principles and forms of governance, suited to deal with the emerging industrial mode of production and its attendant specific social relations. These techniques of management, control and surveillance travelled back and fourth globally through imperial and colonial networks, tested and perfected in different locales. [40] In a different vein, but connected, E.P. Thompson also showed the role secret police played in early industrial Britain in enabling the capitalist class to bring into being the British working class and pattern it according to its interests, by infiltrating the workers' circles and spying on their insurrectional plans.[41]

Abroad, the activity of the secret police was salient in building the European colonial empires and especially for projecting British imperial power globally. This process entailed, among other things, the construction of a vast imperial archive. Thomas

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[37] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[38] Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).Chapter 10.
[39] Terry Crowdy, *The Enemy Within : A History of Espionage* (Oxford ; New York: Osprey, 2006).
[40] For Egypt, seeTimothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).; for Tibet see Richards, for Java, see Stoler.
[41]Thompson.

Richards rightfully noted that the myth of the imperial archive rests on two conceptions of knowledge: positive and comprehensive.[42] For the Victorians, the project of positive knowledge divided the world into small facts, understood as pieces of knowledge that were certain and that could, according to Mill and Comte, be verifiable. The accumulation of these tiny elements would lead then to a comprehensive knowledge, to the totality of knowledge. This imperial legacy of the 19th century inscribes the monopolistic possession of knowledge as undergirding the exercise of power.

This was highly salient for the communist regimes too and their mode of exercising power, of which the secret police and its archive, seeking to register everything about the reality, are a case in point. As Richards observed, in a distinctly anti-Derrida vein, the archive is neither a building, nor a collection of texts, but an imaginary junction point of what is known or considered to be knowable –in short the phantasmatic representation of the epistemological possibility of total knowledge comprised of various snippets of facts and local knowledge that can be traceable and archived. For the secret police everything about reality was supposed to be knowable, graspable and archiveable.

But the archive is the interface between knowledge and the state. As Richard points out, in late 19th century and early 20th century the physical embodiment of this imperial archival fantasy was Tibet, the archive-state, the state as archive where even Sherlock Holmes retreats to enhance his wits:

> The archival confinement of total knowledge under the purview of the state was Tibet, an imagined community that united archival institutions in one hieratic archive-state. In Western mythology Tibet was a sanitarium for the recuperation of an exhaustive knowledge that was always in danger of entropy, loss, or destruction. It was a fortress of solitude to which Sherlock Holmes, repository of a complete knowledge of all the streets of London, retires during his two-year disappearance, beyond the reach of call, to collect his wits by meditating on the sum total of knowledge itself.[43]

As such, the state is central to human life and knowledge. More to the point, state and knowledge are inseparable and the state becomes the very epistemological foundations for the existence of knowledge, which in turn must remain the purview of the state. Or, as Richards aptly put it, there is an inseparable link between classified information (in the sense of ordered, cataloged, taxonomized) and classified information (in the sense of hidden, cached, secret). Ordered and catalogued: the scientific knowledge is inextricably linked to the power of secrecy.

State knowledge and secret knowledge are almost interchangeable and the means to acquire them virtually indistinguishable. In the 19th century, despite its ubiquity, spying was still an amateurish and non-formalized occupation. As Richards notes about India, it emerged from within circles of intellectuals and friends belonging to universities and learned societies. The security police of the British Empire (the

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[42] Richards.
[43] Richards, op cit., pp. 11-12.

Secret Service, the Foreign Office) primarily recruited its agents and derived its methods of operation and surveillance from within these circles, particularly those involved in producing classified (in both meanings) comprehensive knowledge, especially the geographical, demographic and ethnographic societies. Such members were multi-tasked: spies producing knowledge about the colonial reality while their reports recommended forms of altering that reality, of making it more governable, transparent and knowable.

In the context of the Soviet modernity in Eastern Europe, the agents of the secret police played a comparable role. They had to generate classified information about the communist reality for the state, while also being asked to suggest modes of intervening in the reality they were describing with a view to making it intelligible for state action and policies.[44] As such, state knowledge and secret knowledge also became one. The comparison is apt once we leave aside the inevitable brutality of the secret police and focus instead on the actual practice of generating and gathering knowledge. Consequently, the Securitate is nothing else that a type of anthropology conducted by the state among its own citizens, in keeping with the knowledge interests of the state and its ideological presuppositions.[45]

At the same time, I do not want to suggest that the Soviet power was colonizing the local populations, especially in post-war Eastern Europe. This is the argument of the anti-communist elites, regarding communism as a Russian imposition from outside, a form of national occupation. Rather, my point is that the practice of using secret agents for generating knowledge about reality should be regarded as a particular practice among many other modern ones of rendering the world knowable and graspable. The secret agents and the anthropologists, while performing particular tasks in differently patterned institutions, nonetheless share a common epistemological ground in the way knowledge is defined, accumulated and used, specific to western modernity. Both are involved in processes of "translating" the surrounding world in specifically codified languages and both share the ambition of rendering visible what appears hidden (be it meaning, groups of people, or practices). Ultimately, both produce thoroughly de-naturalizing effects, elevating concrete, immediate phenomena to abstract understanding. They are two of the most important epistemic tools through which the very concept of a global modern world becomes conceivable. Ultimately, they are a form of science of the social.

In their influential work *Laboratory Life,* Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar explored the daily routine of a group of scientists that leads to the creation of scientific facts.[46] What they notice is that most of the work of the scientists consists largely in producing various forms of *inscriptions* and that most of the time is spent writing and revising. This writing accumulates as papers to be published in scientific journals

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[44] Aurel I. Rogojan, *Fereastra Serviciilor Secrete : RomâNia ÎN Jocul Strategiilor Globale*, Clarobscur (Bucureşti: Compania, 2011).

[45] For a detailed discussion of anthropology as a science of writing and making notes and especially fieldnotes, see Roger Sanjek, *Fieldnotes : The Makings of Anthropology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Despite its unbearable post-modern take, it is a good account of how anthropology is essentially based on this process of classifying information obtained from informants. For what the Romanian secret agents and informers actually did, see Carmen Chivu and Mihai Albu, *Dosarele SecurităŢIi : Studii De Caz*, ColecŢIa Document (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007).

[46] Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life : The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

accompanied by an entire corpus of diagrams, texts, charts, maps and so on. The authors conclude that the laboratory is a place that takes statements of one level of facticity and transform them into other levels, in a 5-step scale that ranges from very factual to speculation. Latour and Woolgar offer a processual definition of science. Instead of a substantive answer to "what is science?" they suggest to look at practices and analyze what the scientists *do*.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of Latour's model in general (its presupposition of a degree zero of nature that can be mapped, its belief in science as "cycles of accumulation", its reliance on ethnomethodology, etc.) his idea of science and how science actually comes into being is helpful in understanding the secret police (and anthropology for that matter) as a form of "mapping" the reality aimed to transform the everyday reality into scientific inscriptions, legible, intelligible and usable for the exercise of power. The secret police is then a large social laboratory established by the state in which social facts are transformed into scientific facts through processes of recording (testimonies, conversations, meetings and so on), observation, codification, taxonomy, cartography, reading and, above all, writing for the use of the political power. Ultimately, in modernity, science is nothing else that the promise of rendering intelligible and visible, through various mechanisms and techniques, things that are otherwise opaque, discreet and invisible.

But there is more to it. The Securitate was tasked not only to gather knowledge but also to actively take part in shaping the new communist reality. As it were, the Securitate had to integrate in its functioning two types of opposing knowledge and knowledge production mechanisms. On the one hand, the typical positivist and empirical knowledge which emerges by engaging the reality through particular knowledge tools. On the other hand, a priori knowledge that emerges from the theory of communism, that is, from the truth of ideology. This a priori, superior knowledge had to inform the remaking of reality and had to, by definition, take precedence over the empirical reality as such.

To put it differently, the secret police was called simultaneously to acquire factual knowledge (through surveillance, recordings, etc.) while subordinating it to the truth of ideology (which entailed deciding who is a spy, a traitor, etc. based on theory and ideology). The real contradiction of knowledge at the heart of the communist regimes, best exemplified by the secret police, is that they had to rely at the very same time on both deductive and inductive logic. Inductive logic meant broad generalizations based on very particular and fragmentary details: for example, the observation of a dialogue between two dissidents would necessary be the sign of an anti-regime complot sponsored from abroad. The possibility for these broad generalizations was offered by the very ideological presuppositions on which the regime was premised.

Already rooted in Marxism there was the strong imperative that the task of any communist politico-philosophical practice is to change the world. This belief was quintessential for the Bolsheviks that took power in USSR in 1917 and in practice defined the existence of the Soviet system as a better alternative to Western modernity. All spheres of life were to be thoroughly transformed in keeping with the communist thinking and against all bourgeois remains. The material world, people and social relations had to undergo, simultaneously, a radical break with the past. In this context, the arts also had to break with their focus on representation (of nature, of

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reality) and actively take part in the revolutionary transformation of society by changing ideas, habits, feelings and so on.

This idea was well rooted in the avant-gardes of the early 20th century and after 1917 became part of the communist project more generally.[47] But if the artists and cultural creators were called upon to take active part in this sweeping transformation, so were the secret police officers.[48] They had to not only monitor and report on people, but also to actively take part in molding them as New Men. At the heart of the communist secret police was not only a desire to repress and control but also to actively and performatively create better citizens.[49] Or, as Rancier put it apropos of police in modernity "*The police is not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social. The essence of the police lies neither in repression nor even in control over the living. Its essence lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible*".[50]

Deriving originally in the distinction J.L. Austin made between constative and performative utterances, performativity describes the active making of reality through speech and discourse. The performative act comprises the locutionary level (the speech itself, organized by phonetics, syntax, grammatical rules and so), the illocutionary level (the social function of the locution) and the perlocutionary level (that is the social effect it generates). To put it in Judith Butler's terms, discourse has the reiterative power to produce the phenomena it regulates and governs. Performative acts cannot be judged according to criteria of true and false, as it is the case with the constative ones, but with some criteria measuring their effectiveness or persuasiveness. Finally, for Judith Butler, precisely the capacity of power to performatively construct the reality and the subject of its exercise, also offers the space in which resistance to that power can be formulated by breaking the chain of reiterability.

Alexei Yurchak developed this point in a compelling fashion in relation to Soviet communism.[51] Yurchak believes that what characterized this system was people's repeated enactment of the form of the regime's authoritative discourse, without attending to its constative meaning. The repeated performance of these fixed forms opened ways for the emergence of various meaningful and creative activities, communities, beliefs, and networks. As it were, the very exercise of power through its performative celebrations, parades and ritualistic speeches created the Soviet reality while also engendering the preconditions for its own subversion.

One of my informants witnessed the following episode one day in the CNSAS reading room. While consulting his own surveillance file, a man took out a pen and started to make his own annotations on the original, marking those things that were factually true and crossing out those that were false or incorrect – to the horror of the

[47] Boris Gro*is, *The Total Art of Stalinism : Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[48] Vatulescu
[49] It is perhaps useful to note in this context that the name of the foreign intelligence service of East Germany was: Hauptverwaltung Aufklarung –the Department of Enlightenment -in Garton Ash, pp.16.
[50] Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, "Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics," (London ; New York: Continuum,, 2010). http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uchicago/Top?id=10427317.pp. 36
[51] Yurchack.

archive's guardians.[52] This is perhaps the perfect metaphor, the extreme case, of how the files were generally read in post-communism: with an eye to their correspondence to reality, to their trueness in relation to facticity. But as suggested already this kind of reading might miss the point.

The common thread of the files is that they seem to document various attempts at challenging the reality presented by the communist regime, attempts at formulating, presenting, disclosing a different reality. To put it differently, secret files registered attempts at or actual instances of challenging the communist Reality through an account of reality based on a representational and empirical perspective, ranging from banal conversations about the lack of bread in shops to more political positions and to summaries of Radio Free Europe bulletins. These small acts of dissidence, or to put it in Yurchak's terms, these refusals to participate in the performative production of the communist Reality that every citizen was expected to do -remember here Havel's famous example with the greengrocer dispassionately but guiltily participating in this game- were then codified in the language and imaginary of the Securitate which effectively meant the beginning of anti-regime complots, or the traces of an imperialist plot, or acts of provocation and unrest and so on.[53]

From this non-representational perspective that ceases to concern itself with issues of correspondence and trueness we can also understand the phenomena of political dissidence during communism and its particular character. The space from which the dissidents criticized the regime was actually made possible by the very communist regime itself, by its attempt to escape the constraints of the capital and by its core belief that reality must be transformed in accordance with an idea, with an ideal. It is not only as Zizek wrote that all the ideals of the anti-communist struggle (human solidarity, democracy, freedom, and so on) were themselves already inscribed in the communist goals, but more importantly perhaps, the notion of "dissident" itself makes no sense outside of the communist regime, outside its performative effects and belief in the transformative power of Reality.[54]

In effect, it was the secret police that produced the "dissidents", giving meaning to their actions as dissidence, as being subversive and registering them as such, making a note of them, inscribing them in the archive of power. What I have in mind here is something more specific than the circularity of power described by Foucault: power is inseparable from resistance; there is no resistance without power. More to the point, Boris Groys was right to note that there are no "dissidents" in capitalism because capitalism is based on money and figures.[55] As such it functions in a purely representational and empirical mode, whereas communism was a regime based on words, in which words and ideas were primary forces in ruling and shaping the reality, best discernable in the belief that politics should take precedence over the

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[52] This episode raises also interesting questions about ownership and property of the archive. Who do the files belong to? Do the people surveillanced there have any claim to the files? Are the files solely the property of the state even though the files usually contain personal items, like letters, intimate conversations and so on? I owe this point to Katherine Verdery.

[53] At a careful reading, the secret police files and their protagonists are structured similarly to the plot of the socialist realist novels with their basic structure opposing heroes and villains. For a good analysis of these novels see, Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel : History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[54] Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*

[55] Boris Grois, *The Communist Postscript* (London: Verso, 2009).

economy. One can be a dissident only in this context where the word and writing are powerful instruments and where the struggle over meaning and the power to create worlds with words is quintessential. It is little wonder that many of the people spied on by the Securitate were professional writers, since they could theoretically pose the biggest danger to the regime. It explains why the Securitate also produced a huge amount of texts: it bespoke the ideological foundation of a regime based on word and the power to construct ideology and reality through them.

Perhaps the best illustration of this point is the remarkable publication called "*Eu, fiul lor*" [I, their son] - the title of a collection of extracts from Dorin Tudoran's 2000-page long Securitate file.[56] It reads like a genuine detective novel. The story begins in early 1970s when Tudoran, a promising young poet, criticized the ossified literary world as a symptom of wider societal problems. His anger was magnified by his impossibility to travel abroad at want. His critical stances got him into trouble and he lost his job as a cultural weekly editor. When Tudoran petitioned the authorities to give his job back, the Securitate opened a surveillance file, adamant not to repeat a "Paul Goma case".[57] Their goal was to calm things down quickly and shelve the matter.

However, precisely the interaction between them and Tudoran, their surveillance strategies, their attempts to link Tudoran with the west and to find clues of a possible wider plot, their misreading of information and banal everyday acts blew things out of proportion. Tudoran's initial specific demand for ensuring the means for making a living –inscribed in the communist constitution- later evolved into an outright criticism of the regime. His fame grew while his style became more acid and his criticisms more penetrating. Slowly, he became a genuine dissident, recognized as such during his brief police arrests. Soon, foreign journalists were keen to interview him while, Radio Free Europe aired his texts, illicitly smuggled from Romania.

By now, the end of the book becomes predictable. Dorin Tudoran became the new Paul Goma: a dissident that the regime tries to get rid of. Tudoran was pressured into definitive emigration, first to Paris, then to the US. Therefore, the title of the book captures with brilliance this performative effect of the Securitate: only the secret police actions turned Tudoran into a dissident. This possibility already existed in the very opening of his surveillance file. Once he was identified as a target, the possibility of becoming a dissident was already present due to the very logic of interpreting reality undergirding the work of the secret police. The ideological, structural level of the functioning of the Securitate, its performative function of creating "dissidents" and "complots", was much more powerful than its immediate stated goals and interests which sought to avert such a scenario.

Furthermore, Tudoran's example best illustrates the fact that the regime was not willing to change the reality in order to fit its ideological precepts (meaning to turn Tudoran into a scapegoat to prove the existence of plots as any proper fascistic regime would do), but was simply creating anew a reality in which Tudoran was at the center of a wide web of spies, French connections and illegal trade of manuscripts. Thus,

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[56] Tudoran and Ioanid.

[57] Paul Goma branded himself as the Romanian Solzhenitsyn. He was indeed the most important Romanian dissident, forced to immigrate to Paris. After 1989 however he became known for his furious anti-Semite positions and flirtatious attitudes toward the extreme right.

while the large paper trail of the archive might be a sign of its power to include everything, it is also a sign of its "*administrative anxiety*"[58], of its failure to properly grasp and produce reality. Tudoran's exemplary case dovetails both the attempt of the Securitate to create reality and its ultimate failure to do so convincingly. The vastness of the Securitate archive, its parallel language and intricate system of signs, its regimes of visibility and secrecy and its massive amounts of written texts are indicative of its largely unsuccessful attempts to properly fulfill the task attributed to it.

But while it is important to thoroughly circumscribe the secret police to modern practices of knowing and legibility and cease to regard it as a Soviet aberration and concomitantly to point to its performative character as indicative of the wider contradictions at the heart of knowledge production specific to the regime, by confining the analysis only to this level of knowledge, governmentality and management of the population runs the risk of reifying it only as a technology of power among many others. This is hardly a useful explanation in the case of the actual functioning of the secret police in historically specific contexts of the communist states. This genealogical view must be supplemented with a thoroughly historical analysis of embedded practices and class relations.

Class Struggle for Knowledge

In *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus* Georgi Derluguian noted that one of the causes that laid the foundation for the collapse of the communist states was informational scarcity: that is, the lack of genuine information on the actual state of the economy and society. The attempt to establish a monopoly in every sphere of life, from the economic plan to the sex life, deprived these Party-States of a mechanism through which to evaluate and control the performance of their own bureaucracies and work of the intelligentsia.[59]

Similarly, but in a different vein, Andreas Glaeser proposed an epistemic explanation of the failure of communism.[60] For Glaeser communist states failed because the communist elites did not manage to produce adequate understandings of everyday functioning of the society. Therefore, they could not develop timely reforms of the system, in keeping with wider societal mutations. By remaining strictly observant of ideological dogmas, the party leaders lost touch with the actual reality and also lacked the proper means to understand it. Ultimately, communism failed when it could not sustain any of its pretenses: neither that of a superior knowledge producing a better life for all, nor that of the power to actively shape reality for the better.

While Glaeser is right to point out these inbuilt tensions within the communist system, he overstates the case concerning the extent to which various communist regimes were keen to implement what he calls a "monolithic intentionality": that is, the subordination of the entire social reality to the ideological norms devised by the Party. Communist parties did not produce only hard-core ideologues shaping the new communist life ideatically and discursively, but it also had to create various technical specialists and scientists able to run the economy and the society. While the regime

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[58] Stoler.
[59] Derluguian.
[60] Glaeser.

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tried to keep them in check and subordinated to the ideological project, they nonetheless had their own autonomy conferred by the mastery of technical and scientific competences and knowledge. What Glaser fails to see, like many western scholars of communism, is the class nature of communism itself.

Instead of seeking the contradictions of the communist system in a too rigid attachment to ideology that prevented meaningful knowledge about the reality, as Glaeser suggests, we should take the different view and note that the communist Party-State failed precisely because the leaders did not subscribe more forcefully to the communist ideology. Instead, as I argued in Chapter 1, they all embarked on a path of developmental growth, with a rather ad-hoc ideology, mixing various national traditions and ideological tropes. This path made the party politically dependent on the acquiescence and collaboration of the working classes and economically dependent on imports of western technology and know-how, mediated by a class of technical intelligentsia. And here reigns the true paradox: while the party members claimed superior knowledge about the workings of history and the laws of society expressed in the goals of the Plan in keeping with the ideological presuppositions of communism, for the daily functioning of the society they had to rely on the skills of the technical intelligentsia, on their technical competence not their ideological fidelity.

In this context, the leadership of the Communist Party constructed a vast apparatus of surveillance directly subordinated to the head of the state in order to keep control of its intelligentsia and its pretense to de-ideologized knowledge. This makes the secret police inseparable from the cleavages at the very heart of the communist power edifice, defining it, and from the class struggles specific to the communist system.

Consequently, then, the population most targeted by the Securitate surveillances, especially in post-Stalinism, was the intelligentsia, both technical and humanist, simply because it was best situated in a position from which to challenge the Party's monopoly of information and evaluations on the state of the economy and society. The Securitate was a tool in the hands of the Party, used in order to monitor the actions of the intelligentsia, and as a deterrent to the accumulation of knowledge in alternative centers.

In the particular Romanian context this antagonism was best expressed at the level of social and cultural relations of knowledge production. By and large, all academic fields essential to governance, such as the economics, politics, diplomacy, and so on were strictly subordinated to Party control through a series of party-schools.[61] So was philosophy, considered essential for developing party ideology and staunch cadres. Disciplines like sociology and anthropology, that could offer a more objective survey of power and society, were either institutionally marginalized or reduced to folklore studies. In the absence of meaningful surveys of the society and people's thinking, the Securitate took up this task.[62]

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[61] Gheorghiu.

[62] For this see the brilliant collection of Secret police files collected by Florian Banu, *"Amorsarea" Revolu*Tiei : România Anilor '80 V*Azut*a Prin Ochii Securita*Tii*.For a similar situation and point see Glaeser, pp. 146.

In turn, sociology, anthropology and literary studies become spaces for alternative intellectual networks and projects. Significantly, Vladimir Tismăneanu's recalls in his memoir that he was drawn towards sociology rather than philosophy for its more objective and scientific status.[63] Coming from a politically marginalized family during Ceauşescu, sociology became then a form of gaining distinction vis-à-vis the party hierarchy, in effect a form of challenging its authority. Or, to put it differently, while philosophy ensured a smooth path towards becoming a party ideologue at the price of being subordinated to the party dogma, sociology would offer a different form of distinction by virtue of its un-ideological, scientific and objective claims to knowledge. It is then no coincidence that most of the alternative knowledge about the communist regimes that emerged from Eastern Europe, also informing western scholarship, came primarily from sociological circles.[64]

Journalism was another powerful for gathering information about the society. While routinely used for propaganda, investigative journalism and reportage were also powerful tools in the hands of the party to put pressure on intelligentsia and local bureaucrats by exposing their shortcomings and slack. After all, communism was the period in which one of the booming genres was the reportage, a thorough and usually critical inquiry into all the spheres of life.[65] Since the readership was largely the working masses it also fulfilled the purpose of fomenting class struggle against the intelligentsia. But because of its contiguity to power and also because of its access to first hand, un-redacted information, journalism, and journalists in general (many of whom were famous as writers as well) enjoyed a wider degree of autonomy and knowledge, which made them prime targets of the Securitate surveillance at the same time.

Moreover, the Party was strictly controlling the local production of knowledge (books, studies, and so on) in such a way as to serve its own political and ideological purposes or at least to avoid open dissent from the local producers of knowledge. Similarly, the import of knowledge was drastically controlled so as not to offer any ideological and critical ammunition to the local intelligentsia against the party and as such the sphere was dominated by idealist philosophy, literature and marginal French structuralist theory favored for their de-politicized and aesthetic character..[66] Surely, all these features were thoroughly radicalized in late 1980s on the background of the profound economic crisis and party's austerity measures in response to it, which also entailed an increased need to tightly monopolize knowledge-production. In this context of party monopoly, as Katherine Verdery showed, the members of the intelligentsia willing to play along the lines of the party were granted access to funds and positions and were allowed to hegemonize certain bounded and controlled spheres, like the literary field and historiography.[67]

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[63] Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Lumea secreta a nomenclaturii* Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2012.
[64] See in particular the works of Janos Kornay, Istvan Szeleny and Pavel Campeanu.
[65] See also Priestland, *The Red Flag : A History of Communism.*, describing the same phenomenon in China.
[66] For a similar situation in GDR, see Dominic Boyer Foucault in the Bush. The Social Life of Post Structuralist Theory in East Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg, *Ethnos*, 66:2, 207-236.
[67] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania.*

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This division of labor for knowledge production and accumulation was discernable also in the different pathways of formation specific to various classes of the communist state. Initially, the party cadres were formed in party schools that constituted accelerated forms of upward social mobility mainly by virtue of "healthy origin" with a view to replace the interwar bourgeois ruling classes and bureaucracy.[68] Skill and knowledge were less important than loyalty to the party and to the communist ideology. But because of that, party schools also lacked symbolic authority since admission was not tied to knowledge but to the desire for advancing in a political career. As Vladimir Pasti showed, every manager of the socialist bureaucracy had to be first of all a "*good communist*".[69] This notion was then formalized based on reasoning in which one's motivations and values depended more on one's social milieu and upbringing than on personality. This led to the creation of the "*dosar de cadre*" (the cadres dossier) – a register in which the entire biographical trajectory of a person was recorded and measured against the criteria of ideological and party fidelity.[70]

Starting with late 1960s, however, significant transformations of the communist state and economy posed a challenge to this model. After the initial waves of development based on extensive growth sustained by non-economic forms of appropriation (such as nationalization and centralization of agricultural land and industry), which required more political determination than scientific skills, the new requirements of production and the increasing complexity of planning generated the need to properly train cadres and specialists. As a result, the party started to reward technical competences, not just political loyalty. In this context, the university system gained a different symbolic status, together with a vast injection of funding. Entering the university was now considered a major achievement, holding the promise of a firm sense of future and prestige. To put it differently, the communist state began to cultivate its own professional middle class, with consumerist expectations and specific life-style.

Tensions soon abounded. While party apparatchiks were overall less prepared to run the economy, they nonetheless remained in charge of the commanding heights of the economy and of the Plan. They retained the power to allocate and distribute resources and generally to establish the overall directions of the society. Consequently, the intelligentsia remained both politically, economically and symbolically subordinated to the party cadres, and ideologically subordinated to the working classes, which was also on average slightly better paid.[71] The intelligentsia, naturally, began to accumulate frustrations in relation both to the party and the working classes and to become severely hindered in its development by the political monopoly of the party.

These sentiments were amplified by the economic crisis beginning to take root at the end of the 1970s and to reach dramatic proportions during the 1980s. Then, the mobility within the communist system came to a virtual halt, frustrating the intelligentsia for wasting its skills while being excluded from power by incompetent bureaucrats. In addition, because of the deep suspicion of the Party towards the intelligentsia, the recruitment of cadres was done internally from party schools which, following the 1960s professionalization, were able to produce technical specialists

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[68] Gheorghiu.
[69] Pasti.
[70] Ibid.pp. 434.
[71] Brucan.

too, with competences to run the economy, at the expense however, of theoretical and ideological specialists which could have generated alternative political projects and economic visions within the top echelons of the Party. The professionalization of the party schools and their abandoning of ideology explain perhaps why there was no reformist Marxist current in Romania, compared to other countries of the former bloc, which could have been useful during the drab 1980s.[72]

In this context, the Party, through the eyes and ears of the Securitate, sought to keep under control and surveillance the disenchanted and frustrated intelligentsia while it actively devised policies for limiting its growth. In late 1970s, the party reorganized the education system by drastically limiting the number of university places for socio-humanist disciplines, while encouraging only certain technical ones, like engineering, traditionally more aligned to the party interests.[73] This was necessary since under the new economic constraints the Party could not absorb anymore the graduates from these disciplines, leaving them largely disenchanted and prone to rebellion.

But the Party was not interested in actively repressing the intelligentsia. Rather, it aimed just to discourage outright rebellion through constant harassment, intimidation and threats while keeping at bay the accumulation of alternative knowledge. One of the strategies envisaged by the Securitate and the Party was to allow the intelligentsia limited cultural consumption and cultural practices and to encourage escapist, non-political activities. Of course, serious collusions did take place occasionally, some very violent, others leading to serious reprimands and even short-time jail sentences. But by and large, the idea of a particularly harsh oppressive regime is not warranted. The Securitate was perhaps more intrusive because of its instructions to know everything, but not more violent. The myth of the violence of the Securiate is a posteriori one, devised by the intelligentsia as a class in order to justify its lack of political courage against the party as well as the lack of any organized, sustained forms of dissidence.

Unsurprisingly then, in post-communism it was largely the intelligentsia that had a high stake in opening the Securitate files and in cultivating the anti-communist politics of history and memory. Ultimately, the files of the Securitate comprised the biography of the intelligentsia as a class in formation, which was germane for the process of claiming political and economic hegemony in post-communism. Consequently, the post-communist pressures to open the Securitate archive are a distinctive mark of the class struggle already constitutive of the communist society, now prolonged in post-communism, but displaced as concerns with "memory", "justice" and "truth".

By invoking the ubiquity of the Securitate surveillance, as an epitome of the brutality and dictatorship of the communist regime in general, the files of the Securitate were elevated to the status of irrefutable proofs for the need to condemn the past in the name of the formal bourgeois rights pertaining to free expression and protection of the private sphere. The files became the traumatic legacy of the past and the evidence for the necessity to dismantle the old society and build a new one based on western values. As such, the files could always be mobilized as reminders whenever the

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[72] Gheorghiu.
[73] Brucan.

hegemonic consensus of the transition was questioned: they became the insurmountable limit to understanding the past, the vantage point for its interpretation.

The temptation to inscribe the Securitate as the perpetrator of all evils, to turn the secret agents as societal scapegoats has a long tradition *within* the Communist party itself. This model was offered by the de-Stalinization process inaugurated by Khrushchev's secret speech in which the secret police was blamed for siding with the dictator against the party and the working class. Similarly, in Romania, in a speech in august 1968, at the height of his attempts to consolidate power around the nation, Nicolae Ceauşescu also pointed the blame in the direction of the Securitate for the abuses of the 1950s and for generally working independently against and outside the party control.[74]

This engendered not only a reorganization of the Securitate, bringing it under close party control, but also inaugurated a period of coming to terms with the Romanian Stalinist past and with the crimes of the Securitate. During the 1970s, literary, cinematic and intellectual productions openly confronted the Securitate abuses, sometimes authored by people who actively suffered as political prisoners. The centrality of the Securitate as evil is not a post-communist invention, but an ideological construction of the Party itself from the time when it actively sought to create its own intelligentsia. The two are inextricably linked.

But there is a deeper complexity concerning the relationship between the Securitate and the Party. Despite their close connection, their interaction was far from frictionless, thus cautioning against simplistic views that see the Securitate as entirely subordinated to party politics. In fact, the Securitate enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and some of its actions managed to frustrate party apparatchiks. In Romania, the shattering event was of course the defection of general Pacepa, the Chief of Securitate, to the CIA in 1978.[75] Ceauşescu was already suspicious of the Securitate and this event only furthered his feelings and prompted a desire to bring the Securitate under more party control and scrutiny. But this was easier said than done. According to the legislation of the time, the Securitate could not monitor party members without the party's approval. But the secret agents routinely broke this provision.[76]

In fact, what the view that simply subordinates the Securitate to the party and to the dictatorial logic of the regime itself misses is in fact the historical transformations that shaped the institution itself. It also hides the fact that we know so little about this organization and its workers, beyond the ideological simplifications of anti-

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[74] Quoted in Banu.

[75] This is one of the most fascinating cases of the Romanian cold war, very important to understand the dynamics within the secret police and its relationship to the party. Unfortunately, the public discourse about the case took the perspective of Pacepa and his supporters for whom he was an anti-communist hero. For a different, critical perspective, see Liviu Taranu, Cîteva consideraţiuni pe marginea defecţiunii generalului Ion Mihai Pacepa, In Budeancă et al.

[76] Also, even the competition on the soccer pitch between Dynamo Bucharest (the team of the Securitate and of the Interior Ministry) and Steaua Bucharest (the team of the Army) was indicative of this cracks in the edifice of power and of the constant competition and struggles between the Party and the Securitate. This split, in turned, fueled one of the most common interpretations of the 1989 Romanian revolution: a plot involving secret police officers betraying Ceauşescu and staging a coup to their own benefit.

communism. In the 1950s, the Securitate rank-and-file was mostly recruited from working class and peasant backgrounds. Some of its initial violence and hands-on behavior were a result of the class struggle these people were called to enact against the former bourgeois owners and exploiters. The Romanian fascists –the legionars– were also prime targets for this institutionalized violence, and some of them were recruited in order to help catch and re-educate others. But just like with other sectors of the society, from the 1970s onwards, the Securitate started to recruit people based on training and merit, educated in a parallel system of institutions. For secret police officers too, their ideological commitment and class origin become less important than their skills.

In short, the Securitate itself was gradually becoming a corpus of technical intelligentsia. A very privileged one in terms of its position within the society, but also in terms of power and access to knowledge. They were the first to notice the disastrous effects of party policies, especially in the 1980s, and to actively attempt to resist party tasks. For example, Securitate agents frequently pointed out the fact that they could not complete their missions because of lack of gas (the car stopped in the middle of a surveillance mission), lack of paper or of adequate equipment. In addition, many reports hinted to the absurdity of some of the party tasks while also complaining of its "tonnage economy": the pressure to meet the quantitative requirements of the Plan at the expense of quality.[77]

The Liberal Phantasy of Guilty Consciousness

The most important discursive framing that established the boundaries of speakability for the secret police officers in post-communism was Gabriel Liiceanu's *Apel către Lichele*.[78] Written in the stormy days of the 1989 revolution, Liiceanu made a plea to the artisans of the former regime, especially to the secret police officers and their dutiful collaborators, to come out, confess and apologize and then step aside of the new society. Liiceanu assured them that they would be forgiven and loved. As such, the only discursive position allowed for by this framing was one of remorse and forgiveness. Secret police officers were allowed to speak only in order to express penitence and only insofar as they subscribed to the religious, legalistic and inquisitorial horizons outlined above.

In Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 *The Conversation*, Gene Hackman plays the role of Hari Caul, a paranoid and secretive private expert in surveillance techniques whose life is torn apart by the thought that the couple he is spying might get murdered by his employee. The plot follows the moral turpitude of the character, trapped between his professional vows and his moral proclivities. In the final melodramatic reversal, however, he finds out that even though he actually misunderstood the conversation a crime was nonetheless committed, living him doubly powerless and frustrated. Similarly, a private conversation recorded this time by a STASI secret agent, sets the plot for Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2006 *The Life of Others*. Ulrich Mühe plays the role of Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler, an overzealous officer, assigned the relatively routine task of spying on the family of a famous and critical writer. Access to the couple's conversations and to their life-style (listening to classical music, having passionate sex and so on) sets Wiesler on to the path of an internal moral

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[77] Banu.

[78] Gabriel Liiceanu, *Apel CăTre Lichele* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2005).

struggle. In a melodramatic final reversal he switches sides and helps his surveillance target from being prosecuted by the STASI at the expense of losing his job.

What unites the plot of these two movies dealing apparently with very different cases is the shattering personal effect of being exposed to the intimate sphere of others. The underlining idea is that the surveillance of the private sphere presupposes a traumatic encounter with its secrets. The perturbing elements into the lives of the two respective couples are themselves perturbed by the discovery, by the very act of perturbance, raising questions of self-knowledge and self-identity. Reduced to a disembodied voice from nowhere, the Other comes back to haunt the subject doing the surveillance. In yet another melodramatic reversal, the voices the agents of surveillance hear become in fact their own; voices become internalized into their own beings, altering them decisively. As such, the distance between the subject and the object of surveillance is annulled and the subject is caught into the vortex of the living world it tries to grasp from afar and from obscurity.

Put differently, the subject ceases to fulfill only its dispassionate, bureaucratic, almost automatic role of surveillance: it gets re-humanized, it preserves its authentic being by giving in to the life and voice of others. The encounter with the other becomes a moral one: surveillance of the lives of others is never simply an exterior task but, by necessity, it bears the resemblance of a genuine encounter between moral human beings, in a classical Kantian sense. No matter how nefarious and evil the intentions of those doing the surveillance are, no matter how harmful their actions are –or precisely because of all that- in the end they will have to be confronted with the moral implications of their deeds and subsequently go through a dramatic subjective transformation.

This is the reason for the success of the two movies[79]: they espouse, in a perfect ideological manner, the western liberal belief that authority, no matter how cruel and despotic, cannot be really inflexible; it must have its kernel of humanity, of reflection and doubt that only needs to be brought out to light. The evil is never pure evil, and in the right context, with the right type of exposure, good will always come to light and prevail. In addition, one can discern here also the liberal belief in the supremacy of the individual over institutions and structures. In the end, in both movies, the surveilling agents manage to go beyond their societal role and to elevate beyond the very logic of their institutions (writ large).

This transformation is possible because the protagonists, despite their austere and severe lifestyles, are endowed nonetheless with the capacity to recognize love and beauty. In both movies their targets of surveillance are couples deeply in love with each other, which puts them at odds with the rest of the society that tries to destroy them. This genuine, passionate love is what triggers the self-awakening of the surveillance agents. Instrumental reason, symbolized by the presence of audio devices, is overcome by passion, emotion and human identification– a shift that recalls the distrust in the inflexible, implacable reason and its technologic appendixes, underlining a certain strand of western philosophical thinking from Rousseau to Heidegger and Hannah Arendt.

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[79] *The Conversation* won the Cannes, while *The Lives of Others* the Oscar for the best foreign movie

In addition, this focus on love is supplemented by an equal belief in the trans-historical and trans-social power of beauty: in both cases it happens to be music, this non-verbal element, a sort of degree-zero of speaking that completes the transformation of the surveilling agents. Love and beauty appear in the liberal paradigm something that no one can remain immune to and thus able to trigger the subjective transformation towards goodness and morality.[80]

To put it differently, the basic message is that if people would always be exposed to love and beauty, and not to evil and ugliness, like the two characters in the movies seem to have been in their traumatic past only alluded to,[81] then they would cease to do harm and will always choose to do good instead. In this paradigm, the emphasis is then not on some structural conditions of the society, rather the focus seems to be on the idea of a broken biography, a misshapen, an accident in one's life that, with the proper intervention and healing can be redressed. This belief underlines the imperative also articulated by Liiceanu for the secret agents to come out and denounce themselves: remorse and the burden of a guilty consciousness become the precondition for radical subjective transformation, for metanonia, and ultimately for a return to the sphere of morality. Moreover, the same religious discourse and imaginary was used in relation to the informers who came out and confessed their collaboration. The anti-communism discourse compared them to walking the Golgotha, to suffering for their sins and as such were praised for their courage and endurance.

The following example from the Romanian context of my research is paradigmatic for the functioning of the liberal ideological belief, coupled with a religious and conservative reliance on the possibility of conversion. In contrast to the plot of the movies discussed above, in the Romanian reality of post-communism no Securitate agents went through such a dramatic moment of transformation. None came out after 1989 in order to confess and repent and there are no recorded cases of people quitting their jobs after a traumatic encounter during their surveillance work before 1989 either. No agent was willing to assume responsibility for his/her acts and to ask for forgiveness, as intellectuals like Liiceanu hoped for. Instead, as I said, most of them kept silent. In the rare occasions when they did speak, on the contrary, the agents were rather keen to defend their actions as patriotic or contextual and generally to deny their role as murders and perpetrators of the former regime.[82]

The most notorious such case, undeservedly under-researched, is that of Pavel Corut, a high-ranking Securitate officer. After 1989 he became a member of the extreme nationalist party PUNR and later founded his own Romanian Life Party. But his notoriety came as an author of best-selling spy novels based on his experiences as a secret officer. Selling in the millions, Corut was glorifying the Securitate as a patriotic institution engaged not in repression but in fighting imperialist spies, James Bond-style. This form of portraying the communist past, with the most feared institution as a main protagonist, did indeed resonate with large parts of the post-communist public, a fact however largely ignored by the intellectual representations.

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[80] A bourgeois western conception that underlines in an essential way the belief in the power of liberal arts for personal development.

[81] This is a recurrent theme in post-communism when the evilness of the secret police agents is traced back to the dysfunctional and violent relationship they had with their fathers in childhood.

[82] See Rogojan.

The expectation for such a confession was so pressing, that ultimately it had to be invented. In *Drumul Damascului* [The Road to Damascus] Doina Jela used the pretext of an interview with Franț Țandără, a former low rank communist prison guardian, to stage such a confession.[83] While most of the reminiscences in the interview are pretty common and fall in line with other similar interviews of former torturers that took an almost sadistic pleasure in recollecting their tortures and murders, they are presented by Jela as a confession, as an open acknowledgment of responsibility for extra-judicial crimes perpetrated in the communist prisons during the 1950s. There is an un-reconcilable contradiction between the biblical implications of the title of the book and its actual content. Not only that Țandără does not repent and ask for forgiveness (as Jela implies) but he does not even seem to actually regret his acts because he regards them from an almost clinical perspective: they are acts external to him as speaking subject, acts that occurred and would have occurred nonetheless with or without his subjective participation. Basically, Țandără does not attach any meaning, moral or otherwise, to his actions in the past and does not seek to offer any sort of explanation. He is just describing what has happened, in a crude, almost socialist realist fashion.

Nonetheless, the interviewer is keen to highlight some details in Țandără's biography that could shed some explanatory light and somehow inscribe the hero into the realm of tragedy. For example, we find out that Țandără was abandoned in his early childhood by his poor parents and the miserable life that he lived afterwards eventually led him to becoming first a communist, then a communist torturer. Moreover, in a truly dramatic psychoanalytical moment, we learn that Țandără killed his father with an ax, following a veiled suggestion from one of his communist bosses that his father was not worthy for such a fine communist son.

By eliciting this kind of biographical details, and then juxtaposing them onto the crimes and abuses Țandără perpetrated, the interviewer mobilizes the same liberal type of explanation that highlights the adverse moments in one's biography as determinants for their "brutal", "deviant" and "anti-social" behavior. The assumption here is that we need to hear Țandără's entire story in order to understand his abominable actions and to recapture a sense of meaning in relation to them. What we encounter here is not the regular humanization of evil (an accusation Jela had to defend when the book came out) but a truncated form of historical circumstantiation and historical understanding: Țandără's actions are not placed in a societal historical context but in the narrower coordinates of his own traumatic biography. History is abstracted and replaced with Țandără's own memory and biography, elevated to the level of sui generis explanations.

Lucian Pintilie, the much celebrated but highly overrated Romanian film director, took this fixation with biography to a different level in his screening of the book, under the title *The Afternoon of a Torturer*.[84] Pintilie does not read Jela's book as an interview but as a novel and as such he goes on to screen it based on his own interpretation. Consequently, in Pintilie's description. Țandără becomes a true

[83] Doina Jela, *Drumul Damascului* (București: Humanitas, 1999).

[84] There is a supreme irony at play here: in the book the communist-time actor Radu Beligan was labeled negatively a "favorite of the communist regime". He nonetheless played one of the main roles in the movie.

Nietzschean superhero, a person beyond good and evil, a character whose confession represents in fact the articulation of an entire philosophy of life. He is called upon to give testimony not to his acts, but to the tragic paradoxes of life more generally. His testimony ceases to be an act of confession and penitence but a genuine indictment of the meaninglessness of life as such, especially during communism. In the end, both in the book and in the movie, we don't really hear Tandara speak. Or even though he does speak, his voice and message are distorted by the presuppositions and ideological expectations of the anti-communist intellectuals. In the end, even when they are allowed to speak, the former communists and agents in fact remain silent.

The case of Țandără is important also for its metonymic functions: as a prison guardian he epitomizes, in the anti-communist imagination, the function of the repressive system as such of which the secret police was a central element. Just like the metaphor of the prison essentially undergirds the museal representation of the past (see the previous chapter), the image of a brutal prison inquisitor distils the image of the secret police at the expense of historical understanding and concreteness. As such, it prevents the understanding not only of what the secret police was, but also of what it was actually doing. Or, to put it in broader terms, the faction of the technical and humanist intelligentsia –the object of secret police surveillance before 1989 – managed to impose its own ideological version of the communist past after 1989 and in the process to universalize its factional class interests.

III. Crime and Punishment after communism: how to read a secret police file

Political Aesthetics
In 1918, Martin Latsis, one of the leading Chekist instructed:

> *Do not look in the materials you have gathered for evidence of that a suspect acted or spoke against the Soviet authorities. The first question you should ask him is what class he belongs to, what is his origin, education and profession. These questions should determine his fate. This is the essence of the Red Terror.*[85]

Vatulescu uses this fragment in order to point out the difference between the Stalinist secret files and their later transformations. In the first instance, the file was simply rewriting the life of an individual into a "clichéd criminal narrative", a practice that was breaking with the customary realist autobiographical style of the modern era penal system. As Carolyn Steedman pointed out, in western modernity the link between autobiography and police practices is salient.[86] The poor were usually forced to offer accounts about themselves that were kept as police records. Later, in post-Stalinism, the file returns to an aesthetic based on observation and description, and only occasionally on autobiography.

Furthermore, Vatulescu rightfully observes that if the file is read as a biography, it actually reveals how the secret police was constantly changing view of its subjects, rewriting them each time. Surely, during Stalinism, the focus was to make the person depicted fit the criminal categories of the state (and then confess the crimes), whereas

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[85] Quoted in Vatulescu, pp. 32
[86] Steedman.

in post-Stalinism the focus was on unmasking and towards a minutely detailed account of ones life. The surveillance file ultimately aspired to fully cover the entire life of the subject in minute details.

What Vatulescu seems to overlook is the fact that in both cases the files shared a similar drive towards reforming the subject, towards changing his/her character in accordance with the communist ideological expectations. Even during the Stalinist mock trials, when people were forced to confess to crimes they did not commit and which were simply inventions to justify the purges, there was still this redemptive dimension in which the accused had the possibility to repent and fully embrace the communist cause before death.[87]

From this perspective, the Soviet police system, with its emphasis on an overarching understanding of the subject's biography, including class position and family history, was more humane, structurally and objective, than the modern bourgeois policing techniques focusing and punishing the crime without paying attention to the person and its context. In the Soviet system, the individual is never guilty as such, as an isolated human being, but always part of a "guilty" wider set of social relations. The task was not necessarily that of punishing the person but that of effectively changing the social relations, the reality that produced the crime so that there will be no need for punishing and policing. Verdery noted that the Securitate agents were highly interested in the social networks in which the subject of surveillance and the informers were embedded:

> Informer were embedded in social ties which made them valuable for the Securitate. Securitate treated people not as individuals, but as sums of relationships. Securitate gained power by colonizing different socialities in order to work in its favor. Since surveillance and securitate work was based in and on social networks it is impossible to ascertain post-89 individual blames and guilt.[88]

Consequently, contrary to the post-communist dogma, the Soviet-type file system dovetails the unflinching belief in human perfectibility, change and societal progress: living in the proper social and economic conditions, with the proper ideological attitude, a human person will cease to do harm.

This difference is also visible in the particulars of bourgeois and Soviet detective fiction. In the western detective story the focus is on the crime itself and the detective work entails linking the clues (fingerprints, traces, motives and so on) to the murderer. By contrast, the Soviet detective stories pay less attention to the crime itself and focus instead on the overall character of the suspect, on its entire biography and moral universe. Do we not encounter here also the fundamental difference between the bourgeois and Soviet understanding of "biography"? For the former, biography is a chain of particular events in which the individual is at the center, linked together by a progressive narrative; for the latter, biography is always something more structural and less personal, including elements of class position, family history and so on.

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[87] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*. (Boston: Beacon, 1969)
[88] Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archives of Romania's Secret Police*. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

There seems to be a contradiction in the way the files of the Securitate were written and the manner in which they have been read in post-communism. There are different logics. While Securitate envisaged them as "structural biographies", as accounts of an overall social structure comprised of many levels and interlinked plots, the post-communist reading is ultimately autobiographical. Cristina Vatulescu wrote that by understanding the police files as a "true work of art" and as "detective novels", or incorporating them into a collage as ready-made objects, would be a way of aestheticizing them.[89] I think on the contrary that one should reverse this relationship: it is only by reading these files as an work of art and as detective novels that we actually reach the true political dimension of these files. This is clearly the case in post-communism when these files were subjected to an all too literal and factual reading. Precisely the direct, "political" reading of these files with a view to lustration, justice and writing of history is in fact aesthetic, pertaining to the need of the subject to "come to terms with the past", to get over the trauma and to reconcile with his/her Neighbor –a clear case of autopoiesis.

To illustrate this point consider the following example of a particular reading of the Securitate files. Gianina Carbunariu, perhaps one of the most talented Romanian theater directors, dramatized in her show *X mm din Y km* [X millimeters of Y kilometers] the conversation between Dorin Tudoran and Nicolae Croitoru, the Secretary with Propaganda for Bucharest, which took place in April 1985 few months before Tudoran's immigration.[90] Two more people were present at this meeting –D.R. Popescu, the head of the Writers Union and an unnamed person responsible for recording it. The purpose of the meeting was Croitoru's attempt to determine Tudoran to give up his hunger strike, to accept the Party's job offer and generally to straighten up.

When the spectators enter the room of the theater, they have the possibility to choose their sitting place relative to the table where the conversation will take place. The floor is covered with actual fragments of informative notes written in chalk. Minutes before the play starts the actors draw lots in order to see which character they will play. Everything is video-recorded and projected live on a big screen, which seems like a big mirror but also like a huge TV screen coming out of the 1984 imaginary. At one point, the actors stop the play and start all over again, with a different tonality, a different mimic and different gestures. They also change again, and again their roles and script. Ultimately, the characters, their identities and social roles are effectively suspended and what seems to matter is only the discourse, performatively creating the reality of the meeting. The content of the utterances becomes irrelevant, so does the actual identity of those doing the utterance: the text and the script prevail by virtue of their sheer repetition.

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[89] Vatulescu, pp. 18.

[90] The hype with the Romanian "New Wave" cinema, both domestic and abroad, seems to have largely obliterated the much more interesting local scene of theater production. In the past two decades it has been largely more dynamic and cutting-edge, addressing in subtle manner various pressing issues of the transition (like migration, poverty, violence, large-scale transformation, etc.) and of the communist past. Thus, the theater productions, especially those emerging from independent and underground circles, were more political and critical. By contrast, the movies were largely conservative and focused on aesthetics.

At a first level, Cărbunariu's decision against fixed roles dovetail her decision to go against the post-communist moralizing stance that sought to pin down blame and draw sharp lines between perpetrators and victims. This lack of fixed identities, this flux, captures in a convincing manner the in-betweeness, the greyness of the communist society, while it also suspends the space from which definitive judgments can be made in relation to the past. Ultimately, the boundary between perpetrator, victim, neutral witness and accomplice was always very thin and always porous. At a more theoretical level, Cărbunariu's take on this fragment of conversation illustrates brilliantly the power of discourse to ascribe roles and to generate reality despite the immediate intentions of the social actors involved. Basically, the entire script was already written before the actual conversation took place: the communist propagandist plays the role of a peace-maker, sometimes benevolent, sometimes overtly aggressive; the writer plays its role of the dissident, mixing personal problems (like the lack of job and the impossibility to travel abroad) with societal concerns (the daunting shortages the population was suffering) and generally growing more distant as the conversation progresses; the head of the Writers Union just sits there quietly, a mere shadow of authority; while the secret police officers records everything.

This particular conversation is nothing else than the actual materialization of a pre-given scenario: it happened many times before in Tudoran's file and is present in countless occasions in other files as well. There is no real break outside this reiterative circle. The aesthetic reading Cărbunariu offers focuses less on the actual conversation (which in itself is pretty meaningless and factually scarce), but on the wider discursive script that brought into being this conversation, and as such points exactly to the failure of direct, unproblematic representation, to the failure of facticity and correspondence and generally to the impossibility of understanding the logic of the Securitate except in its fragmented, reiterative and discursive construction.

The final suggestion of the play is that ultimately, heroism, in all its dramatic effects, means the courage to break with this monotony and monologue of power, to put an end to its constant performative reproduction. This also means to put an end to the way in which the Securitate, through its archive, continued to distribute people into roles even after its official demise in 1989. This is why Zizek is right to write:

> The gap between public allegiance to the regime and private dissidence was part of the very identity of the Stalinist subject… in Stalinism public appearances matter, which is why one should reserve the category dissidence exclusively for the public discourse: dissidents were only those who disturbed the smooth functioning of the public discourse, announcing publicly in one way or another what privately everybody already knew.[91]

What is more, it seems that this post-facto, post-communist reading of the files is what actually offers them meaning, retroactively. Without the active effort at reading them, these files would remain a collection of formless, meaningless papers. Tudoran's file becomes legible once a professional editor makes the selection of a

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[91] Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* pp. 237

vast material and frames it as a story of becoming and dissidence.[92] The files and the documents are not ordered, have no intelligibility of their own outside the bureaucratic conventions of the institution that produced them. Moreover, the abundance of abbreviations, acronyms, euphemisms, code names, side notes, signs and so on actually render these files incomprehensible. In order to be able to read these documents in post-communism, somebody has to make the translation from the bureaucratic language and conventions of the Securitate, to the "natural language" of transition. The script and language of the Securitate need to be decoded first, in order to become intelligible, but the paradox is that in doing so, its reiterative power is also reactivated.

In the case of these files we witness two levels of translations: a translation of reality into the language and categories of the Securitate, part of its scientific purposes, and a second translation from the scientific, codified language of the Securitate into the parlance of post-communism. Unsurprisingly then, this translation would not have been possible without the active involvement of the former Securitate employees, called upon to decipher its structures and signs and to guide post-communist readers through its corridors and secrets. The archivists of the secret files were very active and attentive readers not simply bounding the documents together but also actively making notes, comparing, checking, underlining and even asking for a double check or for further clarifications. Most of the documents in the files have layers and layers of successive notations, similar to a palimpsest. This becomes useful knowledge for the post-communist readers of these files, but it is knowledge veiled in secrecy and available to initiated few.

One of the recurrent notes on the documents in the Securitate archive concerned the level of privacy and secrecy of the respective documents. Ann Stoler, following Mary Douglas' *How Institution Think*, remarked that the production of secrets is a key convention of concealment that creates the archival form. Cryptic titles, bureaus and directions with strange names and unintelligible acronyms, special regimes for certain documents are constitutive of the archives more generally, so much so for the secret police. Power is then also the power to designate secretes, to inscribe social facts as matter of security, privacy and restricted access. Once inscribed as such, social facts have life and directionality of their own, become issues of political concern and special governance. Max Weber wrote that the official secret was the specific invention of bureaucracy, its mark of power and a sign of its special status within the state.[93]. But secrecy here does not necessarily refer only to something that is hidden and restricted. It is primarily a code, a mode of communication in the parlance of power that limits access and creates hierarchies and different layers of knowledge and control.

There is a revealing episode to this effect in Shentalinsky's *Arrested Voices*, when he narrates his dialogue with an archivist while trying to get access to Isaac Babel's file:

> -But couldn't I have a look at the file itself? At least for a few
> hours?

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[92] One has to note here the difference between the file as such (as it is in the archive) and the way in which it is published –chronologically and logically organized.

[93] Max Weber, A. M. Henderson, and Talcott Parsons, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 1st American ed. (New York,: Oxford University Press, 1947).

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-No.

-Why, is it a state secret?

-No, there are no major secretes here. Or in most such files.
There are certain purely internal matters, though, concerning our
work, that our superiors consider need not be made public.[94]

The power to designate secrets is highly arbitrary. The real locus of power is the locus
of writing, the place where the seal of secrecy can be legitimately placed. In
modernity, this locus is undoubtedly the bureau, the place where inscriptions are
made. The bureau produces a paper trail in its own specialized, cryptic language as a
sign and as effect of its power.

It is obvious today that only the top echelon of the Securitate had access to the *entire*
file: the rest of the employees just contributed with only parts and pieces. Some were
writing reports, some were doing the surveillance, and some were recording phone
conversations, while others were in charge of collecting informers' reports.
Ultimately, the file was nothing else than a huge puzzle that only a handful of people
could see in its entirety.

To the dismay of Aurel Tudose, the former political prisoner quoted at the beginning
of this chapter, the past is written based on *their* archives. There is no outside and
there is no escape from the secret police archive and the type of performative
knowledge it carries, just as for post-communism there is no escape of communism,
only the shadows of its very constitutive dimension. Accessible now as sources of
inquiry into the past, and into the workings of power, the files of the secret police
appear to be the most problematic (and still productive) ruins of communism: the
heart of the power now thrust open. But precisely as ruins, as something that cannot
be properly integrated symbolically, they evoke a specter of traumatic fascination.

The Impossibility of Giving an Account of Oneself: Herta Muller as a Spy

The opening of the Securitate archive generated also a particular autobiographical
genre: the written confrontation with the content of the file. To put it differently, the
reading of the file led to the immediate need for those reading it, reading about
themselves through the eyes of the Securitate, to offer an account of themselves in
light of the revelations from the file. Consequently, it was an attempt at
biographization, of getting hold, again, of one's persona, confiscated by the purview
of the state. More than a confession or memorialization, it represented the unbearable
traumatic moment of confronting One as a Stranger, the proper image of the split
subject.[95]

This aspect was magnified by the acknowledgement that what gave consistency to the
claims of dissidence was the registration by the Securitate in its files of such acts, in
keeping with its internal logic. As Cristina Vatulescu rightfully showed, especially in
the last part of Ceaușescu's regime the purpose of opening a surveillance file was not
necessarily in order to lead to an indictment but to accumulate various details about
one's life and biographical trajectory. Seen from this perspective, the Securitate
archive appears to be the sum of various overlapping biographies and biographical

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[94] Shentalinskiĭ.pp. 19.

[95] This is evident in the quite common practice of publishing one's file parallel to one's diary of the
time. On the one hand the official version of the self, on the other the personal version.

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details of the people under surveillance, and sometimes of the people doing the surveillance. Little wonder then that the practice of using the Securitate archives as (auto)biographical sources has been quite widespread in post-communism and also led to the reconsideration of peoples' biographies and experiences. In *The File*, Timothy Garton Ash wrote:

> The Stasi's observation report, my diary entry: two versions of one day in a life. The "object" described with the cold outward eye of the secret policeman and my own subjective allusive, emotional self-description. But what a gift to memory is a Stasi file. Far better than a madeleine.[96]

A similar situation is narrated by Gabriel Andreescu who wrote that his Securitate file was a highly useful aid-memoire because it saved some elements or details that he could not otherwise remember: the exact day and hour of his first arrest, the content of his pockets during one interrogation, even some dialogues between him and his parents while being under home surveillance.[97] Also, many writers discovered in their files texts that they long lost, Securitate preserving their last copy.[98] The files act not only as sources of history but also as sources of memory, as a memory prosthesis, the external mechanism capable to record everything, and most importantly, to never forget. In fact, it seems that it is the Securitate memory that fulfills the role of total memory about the communist past envisaged by the anti-communist museum.

Franco Moretti noted that despite the collapse of the Greco-Roman culture, the term "narratio" –central to it- reappeared, not in the literary domain but in the courts.[99] The trial has a straightforward narrative structure that emphasized the simplicity of justice, but also its melodramatic character (the villain gets caught and punished). According to Moretti, in modernity the Bildungsroman exists as a genre only in so far as it is capable to replicate the structure of the trial. The novel is inseparable from the trial (in both senses of the term, judgment and going through obstacles). But this relationship seems to be reversed in the case of the trial of communism melodramatically staged in the text of the report: the trial of communism takes the form of a Bildungsroman, of an autobiography of its writers.

To illustrate this point better, I will discuss Herta Muller's text depicting her experience of reading her secret police file and the memory mechanism this triggers. I chose it not necessarily for its paradigmatic character, but because it expresses in a crystalized form (as a sort of symptom for Muller's entire oeuvre) the problem of trauma in relation to the secret police archive and, more generally, in relation to the violence of the communist past that one's need to give an account of oneself.

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[96] Garton Ash.pp. 12.

[97] Gabriel Andreescu, *L-Am UrâT Pe CeaușEscu : Ani, Oameni, Disidență*, Ego Grafii (Iași: Polirom, 2009).

[98] The paradigmatic case here is of course the discovery in the KGB archives of Bulgakov's diary. Following a police search, the diary was taken away with other incriminating writings. When some years later Bulgakov's got his writing back, the first thing he did was to destroy his diary. However, a copy of it, the only one, survived in the secret police archive and was published after the regime change in 1991. See Shentalinskiĭ.

[99] Moretti, pp. 212.

The essay entitled *Securitate in all but Name* was published in *Die Zeit* just few months before Muller won the Nobel Prize.[100] The beginning of the text assesses the uninterrupted activity of the Securitate in today's Romania, still engaged in spying activities. It also draws attention to the opacity and bureaucratically arbitrary nature of the activity of the CNSAS. However, the very last paragraph of the text makes the more interesting observation that:

> In my file I am two different people. One is called "Cristina" [Muller's code name in the Securitate file], who is being fought as an enemy of the state. To compromise this "Cristina" the falsification workshop of Branch "D" (disinformation) fabricated a doppelganger from all those ingredients that would harm me the most – party-faithful communist, unscrupulous agent. Wherever I went, I had to live with this doppelganger. It was not only sent after me wherever I went, it also hurried ahead. Even though I have always and from the start, written only against the dictatorship, the doppelganger still continues on its own way. It has taken on a life of its own. Even though the dictatorship has been dead for 20 years, the doppelganger is still wandering about. For how much longer?

In the reading hall of the CNSAS, a veritable lieu de memoir of the transition,[101] people reading their files were confronted with their alternative biographies, with their secret self, or better said, with their self composed in secrecy. They encountered themselves as Others, dispossessed of their own subjectivity and auctorial powers over their life trajectories. Consequently, according to many reports, the first, immediate reaction to this confrontation is unspeakability - the very inability to speak. Deprived of its auctorial powers, the subject is left mute, unable to grasp this act of violent subjective dispossession.

After this initial shock and confrontation with the unspeakable, the immediate reaction is to fight back and reassume the power to write one's biography. In this transition from the impossibility to speak to the loquacity of the biographization two major issues are at stake: on the one hand the subject is fighting to recover his/her voice and auctorial powers from the Secret police by telling his/her story; on the other hand the subject is trying to regain social trust for his/her own self narration. The doppelganger's claim to reality seems to be much stronger and much more real than any account Muller can offer about herself retrospectively. In a sense, the authentic subject writing the post-communist biographization always seems a fake, a pale copy of the subject created by the Secret police file, as Muller's last paragraph testifies.

The traumatic encounter with the doppelganger is further supplemented by its schematicism, by the type of selections the secret agents operated in the subject's biography. It is not only that the Securitate managed to create a completely new double, very powerful and with a life of its own, but more importantly this double is the result of a series of arbitrary and random selections from one's biography. What is

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[100] The German original is available here. http://www.zeit.de/2009/31/Securitate. For the English version from which I quote see: http://www.signandsight.com/features/1910.html. Retrieved June 16, 2013.

[101] I owe this point to Alexander Kiossev.

missing are precisely the subjective humiliations, acts of violence, harassment and personal psychological discomfort the person under surveillance went through. While the file can performatively create an entire new subject, it does not save the proper evidence for a realist retracing of the past. Put differently, while it can easily construe a subject in an incriminating fashion, it does not also offer the possibility for a rebuttal based on evidence.

In Muller's case, just as in many similar one, we encounter the very limits and paradoxes of the post-communist politics of memory, especially regarding the calls for the full opening of the secret police files: it is not only that by opening these files the logic of the Securitate and its performative powers are prolonged into the present, but that it is precisely the dissident and anti-communist intellectuals who are suffering as a result of this opening, not the former securisti and perpetrators. Their names are surrounded by doubt and their life trajectories lose the unconditional social trust that they claimed to have. As a result they must engage in a lengthy self-referential literature explaining themselves and in the process creating a competing biography to that created by the Securitate. In an almost tragic twist, the post-communist accusers of the Securitate, through their very gesture of accusation, become themselves (again) accused by the Securitate and in need to defend and justify themselves.

At a more general level, what this mechanism espouses is the failure of the liberal paradigm that seeks to approach the issue of guilt, punishment and responsibility not only in pure moral terms, but also from an atomistic perspective of the individual. The very need for biographization that ensues after the reading of the Securitate files represents in effect a powerful reaffirmation of the collective and of the society: not only as addressees of the biographization but also as a recognition that history happens in a collectivity and no individual figures can be singled out *a priori* either as victims or as perpetrators. Ultimately, this need for biographization represents the failure of the idea of individual victimhood and heroism, especially during communism.

Judith Butler was right to note that while we need to distinguish between individual and collective responsibility, we also need to firmly situate the individual responsibility within the coordinates of its collective conditions of appearance.[102] Those who perpetrate acts of violence, like many Securitate agents did, including against Muller, are responsible for their acts. They are neither blind enforcers of social violence devoid of responsibility, nor just simply following orders. Yet, Butler warns that we would make a mistake if we reduce their actions to pure acts of will or mere symptoms of individual pathology and evil, as Doina Jela did in the case of Țandără. Instead of taking the individual as the point of departure in a causal chain of accountability, we would better ask under what social conditions are these individual acts possible; what type of social world gives rise to such acts and why. To ask these questions would entail then to rethink the relation between structural conditions and individual acts.

During the post-communist search for truth, justice and retribution these questions were not necessarily ignored, but ideologically displaced onto the individual. Post-communism, being an ideology of late capitalism, had to preserve intact the idea of

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[102] Butler.

freedom of choice: individuals make moral choices between good and evil, especially during totalitarian regimes, and as such they must be held accountable for their choices. This kind of reasoning is perfectly fitting the view of the rational, deliberative, fully conscious, fully responsible and autonomous subject that neoliberalism construes, in opposition to the view of the subject promoted by communism. In so doing, post-communism gets caught into its own paradox: if individual people are responsible for their acts and choices then the regime is ultimately innocent: people are guilty for not resisting, for not opposing it. Strands of this argument are to be found in Havel's famous example of the greengrocer that through his inertial complacency participates in the reproduction of the regime, but also in some earlier writings of Romanian intellectuals like Andrei Pleșu and Horia Patapievici who blamed the inert masses for their acquiescence and guilty complicity with the regime.

At the opposite end, a series of intellectuals and dissidents were keen to pinpoint the *a priori* criminal nature of the regime itself and of its ideology – most notably in the condemnation report. In this case it is the regime and the ideology that were corrupting people into obeisance and collaboration through crude force and propaganda. Consequently, it is the regime itself that must be condemned, not the people who were all, in different degrees, victims. This is one of the main reasons perhaps why this type of anti-communism was very successful during the transition years: by blaming the regime as such it offered the ideological space for the general construction of popular versions of victimhood, innocence and dissidence – a very convenient compromise between the new post-communist elites and the people, both politically and ideologically.

This compromise entailed that the securisti became a scapegoating category. In his classic study Rene Girard noted that the function of the scapegoat is to bring a resolution to a crisis of which it was considered guilty through its ritual killing.[103] The peace and harmony of the society are restored. Nonetheless, this elevation of the secret police officers to the mythical status of sole bearers of responsibility for all the communist and post-communist societal failures effectively precludes the possibility of grasping the structural mechanisms of a society that make individual actions possible, and also blocks a genuine act of introspection and of coming to terms with the past. In this transference mechanism, the blame is just shifted around, from one category of people to the other (just like in communism) while those making the accusations are always just blameless victims defending their country. At this level there is a very uncanny overlapping between the discourse of the securisti prior to 1989 justifying their repressive actions against the dissidents as a need to defend the country, and the accusatory practices of the post-communist dissidents supporting their claims to lustration as a patriotic duty to cleanse the social body.

In effect, Muller's present text, and her other writings as well, carry the melancholy that this purging has failed, that the securisti are still deeply ingrained in the nation's fabric, organizing its functioning from the background. Ultimately, this is also the structural problem with the law of lustration: far from being a mechanism for generating truth or justice it simply tries to operate a bureaucratic cleansing of the nation by automatically conflating structural conditions with individual guilt. Thus,

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[103] René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

the real problem with the law of lustration is not that it came too late into effect and lost its real cleansing impact, but that its structure relies on an organic understanding of the nation from which some perturbing, corrupting elements must be eliminated. This, in turn, magnified the already prevalent discourse on "corruption" during post-communism and enforced the anti-corruption programs aimed against the former communists.

In this context, Muller's biographization brings to light another form of corruption and its subsequent moral dilemmas. When reading her file Muller is confronted with the bitter truth that one of her main spies was, of course, her best friend:

> This friendship, which meant so much to me, was ruined by her visit to Berlin, a terminally ill cancer patient lured into betrayal after chemotherapy. The copied key made it clear that Jenny had fulfilled her task behind our backs. I had to ask her to leave our Berlin flat at once. I had to chase my closest friend out in order to protect myself and Richard Wagner from her assignment. This tangle of love and betrayal was unavoidable. A thousand times I have turned her visit over in my mind, mourned our friendship, discovering to my disbelief that after my emigration, Jenny had a relationship with a Securitate officer. Today I am glad, for the file shows that our intimacy had grown naturally and had not been arranged by the secret service, and that Jenny didn't spy on me until after my emigration. You become grateful for small mercies, trawling through all the poison for a part that isn't contaminated, however small. That my file proves that the feelings between us were real, almost makes me happy now.

What Muller experiences here is the typical melodramatic reversal, the real secret of the secret files. Melodrama always involves some unexpected and excessive knowledge possessed not by the hero but by the Other, a knowledge that is imparted to the hero at the end. This stands in obvious contrast with the tragedy, which is based on a principle of misrecognition or structural ignorance (through a twist of fate, Oedipus is unaware that he is sleeping with his mother and so on).[104] What one finds upon reading the files in the archive is not some long repressed secret about him/herself, but something that the Other (the neighbor, the friend, etc.) knew all along but kept silent. Consequently, the reading of the personal file represents in fact not a tragic confrontation with one's individual self and past but rather with a collective sociality. The question to be asked here is then: how does the whole subjective and emotional structure of a situation change when one gets to know that the Other (considered as friend, as neighbor, etc.) is in fact a Stranger or even an Enemy?

J. Laplanche and B. Pontalis defined trauma as a fragment from the past that cannot be meaningfully integrated in the symbolic universe of the self and becomes a hurtful point of fixation.[105] But what Muller's narrative expresses, just like many similar others, is not the encounter with an element from the past that cannot be properly

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[104] For a wider discussion of the two categories that have some bearing on the Stalinist condition, see Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*
[105] J. Laplance and B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, (Karnac Books, 1988).

integrated, but on the contrary, an element from the present (the revelation of knowledge) that retrospectively changes the entire coordinates of the past. Contrary to the mainstream understanding, anxiety in the East is not necessarily determined by the insecurity of the unpredictable future of the transition, but perhaps even more traumatic, by the uncertainty of the past. Here, it is not only that one's life can suddenly be deemed futile, useless and immoral, but also one's life-time intellectual, emotional and erotic attachments can be torn to pieces, or at least sunk into doubt by revelations from the secret police archive. In this highly volatile context, in which the next revelation might blow away today's certitudes it is worth asking what does it mean to live a moral, just life? Is there truly a neat border between complicity and victimhood, between perpetrators and victims? In turn, these concerns repose the question of community and friendship: what is the degree of familiarity, intimacy and tolerance that offer the substance of these collective forms of attachment?

Muller notes in the fragment quoted above that after the revelation she was left mourning for her lost friendship. She experienced two forms of dispossession at the hands of the Securitate: on the one hand she was dispossessed by her auctorial power, but also, in the process of mourning, of her subjectivity, being forced to re-evaluate her entire biography following the loss of her friend after the revelations from the archive. This loss of voice and of subjectivity defines post-communist mourning. But significantly this is not a loss in the present, but in the past: Muller is deprived by her own friendship in the past, by her own memories of her friends that now have to be rearticulated and recast in a different light. Freud wrote that when we lose someone we don't know what it is *in* the person we lost.[106] Something is hidden in the loss itself which generates a double anxiety: that of the loss itself and that of not knowing what the loss actually is. This I think explains very well the condition Muller tries to articulate in her biographization as a symptom of other similar conditions: while post-communism was supposed to generate a confrontation with the past, a victory over the past humiliations, it is ultimately experienced as a defeat, as another form of dispossession and loss.

The dark irony implicit in this mechanism is that the only tenable moral position during communism was death: the real true dissidents of communism were those killed by the regime. All who made it out alive will always be haunted by the suspicion of compromise and moral failure. Muller herself was haunted by these suspicions both before her emigration (because she managed to publish a book in Romania and take part in the cultural industry of communism) and after her arrival in the west when she was suspected of being an informer. She writes in her final part of her text:

> The reasoning behind this lenience [of the Securitate], however, was malicious: instead of being considered a dissident among my colleagues at the school, as I had been until then, I was to be seen as profiteering from the regime and, in the West, suspected of espionage.

Therefore, can the situation of mourning offer an insight into new forms of normative politics of memory, guilt and reconciliation in post-communism? Can mourning for one's double loss and double dispossession actually articulate a new relationship that

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[106] Quoted in Butler.

manages to leave behind the violence of the Securitate archive and its twin logic of punishment and denunciation? The failure of Herta Muller's moral stance appears precisely at this level: it is incapable of articulating a politics of memory beyond the register set by the Securitate.

For example, following her suspicion that her friend was a spy for the Securitate, Muller goes on to clandestinely rummage through her luggage in search for clues and evidences in order to incriminate her friend, effectively turning herself into a spy. The possibility of solidarity with the Other, the grounds for reconciliation, pardon and love are annulled. Radical moralism, as an epitome of the post-communist quest for justice and reparation, seems completely incapable and ill equipped to offer the contours of a new community based on solidarity and trust.

Perhaps here one should recall Christa Wolf's, Herta Muller's symbolic nemesis in the German literature, controversial suggestion that those who left their communist countries for the west were only interested in an easy life, acting cowardly and avoiding the harder, but more heroic task, of rebuilding communism. This opposition is structurally constitutive for Muller's case: she not only left Romania for a life in the Federal Republic of Germany, but in so doing she also abandoned her socialist political and aesthetic conviction of her youth as member of the critical Aktionsgruppe Banat. From this perspective, one can recast the fundamental opposition of the communist regimes not as that between the former dissidents and the former communists, but between those who abandoned communism and those for whom communism still remained the unsurpassable horizon after the experience of Nazism. This point becomes important after 1989 also, when most of the former anti-communist dissidents remained completely silent and oblivious to the transition injustices, preferring to continue to focus instead on the past as a worse alternative.[107]

The failure of mourning to articulate a new politics in post-communism compels us to ask what does it mean to live a grievable life, to invoke here Judith Butler's formulation. What lives are grievable in a society and why? Which lives can be considered worthy of being publicly inscribed through the act of mourning? Which lives can be considered worth remembering as victims and which can be discarded as failed, compromised and undignified? To ask these questions means also to inquire into the unequally distributed power to articulate grief and mourning in public form, either through writing or through other forms of public expression.

In post-communism only certain regimes of mourning were deemed legitimate and only certain lives were considered grievable. Since the power to publicly articulate grief belonged to the intellectuals, the category of victim was narrowly defined. Moreover, the intellectuals sought to articulate their own stories, at the expense of other social groups, not endowed with a public voice. As such, the perspective of the propertied bourgeois victim, dispossessed by the communist regime was over-represented to the extent that transitional justice was ultimately inseparable from claims to property restitution and privatization of state assetsThe category of the victim was colored by the class positions and ideological presuppositions of those having the power to publicly define what grief and victimhood is.

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[107] For this point, see Costi Rogozanu's letter to Herta Muller: http://www.criticatac.ro/20208/pentru-herta-muller-2/. Retrieved March 15, 2013.

The real question concerning the "witness" in post-communism is not how witnessing is possible but how does witnessing relate to the communist regime itself? And more importantly, who exactly is the author of such a testimony, who is the author of witnessing? Giorgio Agamben traced the root of the word author to *auctor,* a concept that emerged in the European system of law as the person who intervenes on behalf of a minor or on behalf of someone who does not qualify for positing a legal act.[108] In juridical terms then the *auctor* is the one who offers authority. Agamben extends this legal definition and considers the author as someone who offers the authority of speaking to those who are unable to speak on their own. Similarly, the authority of the witness consists in its capacity to speak solely in the name *of an incapacity to speak*. To bear witness is then the opposite of loquacity and narrative; it is a mode of speaking in the name of an impossibility, of a void. The role of the witness is not to bring to light what has remained unsaid. The witness gives an account of the unspeakability.

In this logic then the act of an author is always an act of co-creation. A real author is a co-author, speaking, standing in for something else and somebody else. Since they pretend to speak only for themselves and about their own personal experiences, the authors of biographizations and memoirs in post-communism actually fail to become authors –that is, auctores, sources of authority. They remain simple projections and creations of the archive of power, unable to break out of its narrative circle.

Instead, the texts of the anti-communist intellectuals and dissidents, especially their biographizations and memoires constructed the social space of the transition as a space of denunciation. Their writings were akin to indictments and clear accusatory practices. Instead of being authors they became vigilantes, guarding the consensus about the past. Anti-communism, rooted in autobiographical abstractization, became a tool for denouncing enemies and for effecting not transitional justice, but for excluding categories of people as scapegoats. Anti-communism constructed the social space as being under a permanent state of emergency, in need of constant moral and historical policing by the guardians of historical truth and memorial discipline.

Many of the extreme right arguments against this type of anti-communism is that is not radical enough, that most of its proponents are in fact highly connected to and embedded in the structures of the former regime. In addition, they point out that the manner of functioning of this anti-communism is ultimately indistinguishable from the way communist practices of denunciation and policing of the public sphere worked. I do not share these criticisms, since what they ultimately demand is a purer form of anti-communism and purging of the undesirable social elements. Rather, I want to point out that anti-communism has the structure of the populist discourse, constructing an organic view of the national body under attack by all sorts of enemies, especially from the communist past. As such, the figure of the enemy is omnipresent but vague and as such it can take many proteic forms. Ultimately, anyone can become an enemy within the ideological hegemony of anti-communism if it does not subscribe to its political and discursive imperatives. Just like it was the case for the secret police.

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[108] Agamben.

How to break this consensus then? How to oppose and short-circuit the exclusionary and denunciatory logic of anti-communism? How to break away from its discourse magnified by the very opening of the secret police archive? How are various other forms of experiences of the past able to articulate in such a social space? Finally, how is one becoming an author in the sense described above? This is the focus of the next chapter in which I move away from the investigation of anti-communism to its subversion, exemplified by the publication of a truly remarkable work: *Iluzia Anticommunismului*.

5. The Illusion of Anti-Communism. Articulating Anti-Hegemonic Struggles in Post-Communism

In the previous three chapters I talked about the hegemony of anti-communism. Now I change tack and focus on attempts to challenge it. In this chapter I explore the 2008 publication of *Iluzia Anti-comunismului* (hereafter *Iluzia*) – a collection of critical readings of the condemnation report – and the network of intellectual friends that put it together. I highlight their criticism of the report and of the anti-communist discourse more generally, while embedding their activities in a historical trajectory of intellectual formation rooted in everyday experience.

Despite being published at a small publishing house outside Romania and in a small print, *Iluzia* had a significant influence. First, it questioned for the first time in an explicit and unequivocal manner the dominance of anti-communism after 1989. Anti-communism was engaged as a specific ideology, serving particular purposes. As such, it was de-naturalized and historicized. In turn, this maneuver opened up the possibility for other forms of critical stances in relation to the transition years, at odds with the anti-communist ones, to emerge.

Issues of exploitation, relations of production and the capitalistic nature of the present started to come to the fore. Instead of describing the transition period as a struggle between the neo-communists and the anti-communists, this new perspective questioned this simplistic dichotomy by pointing to wider social struggles within the society and to the silenced contradictions and muted outcomes of the so-called democratization process and neoliberal reforms. Far from being a simple intellectual game Bourdieu-style, the questioning of anti-communism was in fact a form of class struggle: the class project put forward by anti-communism was now critically challenged by people differently situated in relation to capital and labor, from a different generation, with a different experience of communism and transition and with a different intellectual background and pathway of formation.

And this is the second important outcome of *Iluzia*. Its appearance signaled the conscious effort of a generation to come together publicly as a common voice. It was an "of-itself" moment for a generation of writers and cultural creators that until then worked individually in the interstices and in the margins of the local establishment. Vasile Ernu (b. 1971), Costi Rogozanu (b. 1977), Ovidiu Țichindeleanu (b. 1976) and Ciprian Șiulea (b.1969) were already published authors and established critical voices prior to *Iluzia*. But their coming together in a collective project, of which this book was only the first step, gave a programmatic character to their intellectual and political interventions.

This will be the focus of this chapter. I structure my investigation in two parts. First, I discuss the struggles to publish *Iluzia* and its main arguments thus analyzing in the process the manner in which anti-communist hegemony works in practice, foreclosing other discourses and intellectual possibilities. In so doing, I discuss the politico-economic structure of the local cultural industry from which *Iluzia* was banned for being unsellable. In the second part of the chapter, I look closer to the network of

friends that published this book. I investigate their interactions, forms of socialization and practice while discussing in a historical perspective their pathway of intellectual formation and socialization from communism to the transition years.

This discussion has two important theoretical implications. First, taking a cue from the sociology of intellectuals developed by Randall Collins, I prefer to look at networks of intellectuals instead of individual figures as independent, autonomous creators.[1] In doing so, the emphasis shifts from a survey of ideas to interactions, practices and collective action. Moreover, inspired by Dominic Boyer's ethnography, I by-pass the typical impasses of the analyses of intellectuals by offering a processual definition of the intellectual instead of a substantive one.[2] Rather than trying to understand what intellectuals are, I am more interested to see what they do, in particular contexts and in patterned forms of action and interaction.

I. The Illusion of Power and the Power of Disillusionment

Public Reactions to the Condemnation Report

The anti-communist establishment largely cherished the work of the commission, quoting the irritated reactions of people like Ion Iliescu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor as proofs that the report had hit the right nerve. In many respects, this indictment of communism, even though largely symbolic, was something the anti-communist intelligentsia was calling for in the past two decades. It was a moment of revenge when the state was finally endorsing their ideological perspective.

In this context, initially, a truly staunch critical perspective of the condemnation commission came from the extreme right. They dismissed it as being the work of former communists condemning other former communists. For them, the condemnation was not genuine, but a farcical show between two antagonistic neo-communist factions. The paradox is that in a sense this perspective was in fact correct: the condemnation commission signaled factional struggles at the level of the Romanian post-communist dominating class. But, as usual, whatever grain of truth there is in the extreme and populist right, it is quickly muddled by preposterous claims. For example, Vladimir Tismăneanu was dismissed for being the son of a Communist Jew or for being a CIA infiltrated agent (or both). The report was found at fault because it did not offer more space to the fascist anti-communist arguments or for failing to acknowledge openly fascist political prisoners of communism, considered saints by the extreme right.

Nevertheless, the nature of these affirmations did not prevent members of the commission, especially Vladimir Tismăneanu, to seriously engage them into dialogue. Just like anti-communist intellectuals of the 1990s were assiduously reading Vadim Tudor's incendiary weekly *Romania Mare*, after the condemnation Vladimir Tismăneanu was reading and quoting extreme right blogposts. This type of exchange had the disturbing outcome of locking together the anti-communist intellectuals and the extreme right into a prolonged interaction. They both needed each other in order to justify their positions. For the anti-communist establishment, the presence of the extreme right was a clear sign that there is still much work to do in order to achieve

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[1] Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies : A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).
[2] Boyer.

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full de-communization and democratization. Conversely, for the extreme right, the presence in the vicinity of power of people connected to or owing their notoriety to the former regime was the sign of a prolonged communist conspiracy. Therefore, the nationalists and the extreme right became the raison d'etre of remaining militant in relation to the communist past. Yet again, the social space was constructed as being under attack, and anti-communism was the last line of defense.

But if the arguments of the extreme right were given spotlight, the truly critical stances against the report elaborated in liberal and leftist stances were ignored. As I will show below, acknowledging these criticisms would have entailed in fact accepting a historicization of the Master-narrative of anti-communism, a form of rendering it a regular discourse instead of simply endorsing it as the unsurpassable intellectual horizon of the transition.

The publication of the condemnation report led to an unexpected outcome. What rendered the anti-communist discourse powerful during the transition years was its constant externality in relation to political power. Since state power was largely monopolized by the neo-communists, anti-communism was strong insofar as it could point to their corruption and shady past, while highlighting its superior moral stance outside the networks of power. While the report was supposed to be the high moment of anti-communism, its entanglement with state power via the presidential commission, in fact weakened it. Precisely at its most powerful moment, anti-communism was in fact undermining its own foundations. The actualization of the anti-communist discourse into politics signified its end as a Master-discourse and its power as a moral stance.

To put it differently, anti-communism was premised upon its claim that it was fighting the power of the communist illusion into the present. This was considered an unfinished battle worth fighting. But through the act of condemnation, especially since it originated from state power, the battle seemed now won and the mission accomplished. This gave anti-communism and its proponents the illusion of power that they can influence political battles and, finally, the course of history.

In this context it is important to remember David William Cohen's observation that *"hegemony does not fully enclose the processes of production of history but lies within the contexts that produce, reproduce, change historical knowledge"*. [3] Controlling the context of historical knowledge production is crucial. But the paradox to be noted here is that precisely the institutional context in which the condemnation commission and the report appeared necessarily changed the customary contexts in which anti-communist knowledge was produced. Now, anti-communism was imbricated with state power. In this internal transition of anti-communism to power, it let loose of its control over the context of historical knowledge production. Anti-communism was now subordinated to political power and party battles *tout court*.

Consequently, it was important to regain this control and I think this was also the role of magnifying the disputes with the extreme right: to invent a new exterior position in relation to which anti-communism could claim moral superiority. But, more significantly, the attempts to regain control over historical knowledge production

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[3] David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).pp 27

were evident in relation to the liberal and leftist criticisms of the report. The following two vignettes render this point clear while offering an image of how anti-communism, as hegemony, works in practice, enforcing a particular logic over the local public sphere.

In a rather cryptic blog entry in October 2008, Mihail Neamtu a blogger for the news daily Cotidianul[4], acknowledged that the condemnation report is a "*historical-literary document*" that deserves a careful and critical reading.[5] However, such readings must be distinguished, Neamtu continued, from "*blind attacks*". He identified such attacks coming from two different, though inter-related zones: on the one hand, from the "*academic left*" and on the other from the extreme-right groups. Such an "*involuntary*" alliance against the report was highly problematic for Neamtu, particularly in the context of the triumph of the left doctrines "*both in Brussels and in Washington DC*".[6]

The reasons for this intervention were dispelled the next day when Neamtu wrote a new entry. In a dramatic change of heart, he questioned the very possibility of questioning Tismăneanu's Report. Since it condemns communism, it should be on a par with the Wiesel Report, the report that investigated the Holocaust crimes perpetrated in Romania.[7] Consequently, if the latter cannot be denied without leading to accusations of negationism, the same should hold for a report dealing with the crimes of the Gulag. In this roundabout way, Neamțu was in fact announcing his displeasure of learning that the book *Iluzia Anti-communismului* was about to be launched soon, engaging critically with the condemnation report. For Neamtu, this was plain negationism. He therefore took issues with the title of the book itself, acknowledging that he had not read the book and had no intention of doing so. The title was enough to suggest an altogether morally dubious enterprise.

In between Neamtu's first and second blogposts, his colleague Ioan T. Morar[8] took a different route in dismissing the book. Instead of questioning the title, Morar dismissed the authors as an alliance of "*old and neo-Marxists*" that believe that it "*is cool to be atheist, leftist and gay*". Morar conceded that this was only a transient phase, which will come to an end once such people will not receive scholarships from abroad for their fake and opportunistic Marxism. Morar finished his brief text on the same note as Neamțu, pointing to the victims of communism and those of the Romanian revolution in particular.

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[4] Mihail Neamțu is a conservative theologian, regularly publishing commentary in the cultural and mainstream press. He started his career with Andrei Pleşu, and then became the aid of Vladimir Tismăneanu at IICCMER. In 2012 he entered politics with little success so far.

[5] The blog entries are not available anymore, since Cotidianul changed owners a few times, its editorial team and political orientation. It ceased to exist in print and only survives online with almost no readership. I kept a copy of those blogs in my archive.

[6] In translation, this refers to the election of Obama as president and the rather common reference of the Romanian conservatives to EU as a socialist construction.

[7] Details about this here: Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel". and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung., *Holocaust Memory and Antisemitism in Central and Eastern Europe : Comparative Issues : International Conference, Bucharest, May 14, 2007* (Bucharest: "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, 2008).

[8] A well known Romanian journalist and humorist of the early 1980s and 1990s and a close friend of Tismaneanu.

These interventions are particularly relevant for the socio-cultural context in which *Iluzia* appeared because they expose some of the salient mechanisms through which anti-communism discursively creates its enemies, while effectively silencing them. I call this mechanism an *ideological preemptive strike*. One of the main features of such a move is that the formal content is purely irrelevant. It is no contradiction that both Neamțu and Morar authoritatively dismissed a book they neither read nor even saw: it was much more important to properly frame it, to pin it within the wider ideological and discursive constellation of anti-communism, hence aiming to control the creation of historical knowledge and utterances. The interventions made by Neamțu and Morar had the role not only to properly silence criticisms by maintaining the ideological space around the authoritative discourse intact and its code unaltered, but at the same time to also keep silence over the manner in which anti-communism effectively works. To put it differently, in Zizek's words, anti-communism, with its entire assemblages of ideologies, institutions and powers silence and marginalize its critics by operating as an effective "*ideological anti-oxidant*": that is, any criticism is met with loud reminders of the perils of "totalitarianism" and "fanaticism".[9]

Belittling the authors and castrating them of any moral or discursive authority is thus not another sign of the proverbial Romanian rudeness, but a logical and strategic move in delivering a successful and effective ideological blow.[10] The authors of critical utterances are portrayed as lacking any moral grounds on which to base their claims because of the inherent irrationality of their positions. The critical stance in relation to anti-communism becomes itself irrational and in fact equated with the killings perpetrated by communism, in a tautological construction that justifies the construction of a chain of equivalences linking the criticism of anti-communism, to leftism, to communism and to totalitarianism –that is with murder. Every act of criticism becomes then a prelude to killing. Or, to put in Tismăneanu's words, the criticism of anti-communism and of the report put forward by *Iluzia* was made under the "*flag of an irresponsible Marxism-Leninism a la Zizek*".[11]

Jacque Rancier wrote that belonging to a community is based on being able to make historical claims that justify that belonging.[12] But constituted communities already have a powerful claim over history and as such they are able to draw the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. This is the case with the anti-communist community of discourse and knowledge production about the past. To be able to be part of it, to be recognized as such entails subscribing to its implicit rules and norms that grant the recognition of the possibility of authoring historical interpretations. Rancier is right to point out, attempts to challenge dominant modes of historical representation and knowledge pose not merely a question of facts, of getting one's facts right, since precisely what counts as fact is validated only by the hegemonic history. The process of making alternative historical claims and authoring alternative historical knowledge

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[9] Zizek.

[10] This is also evident in the subsequent reviews of *Iluzia* in the mainstream press. I thank Andrei State for collecting and sharing with me all the reviews of the book.

[11] See Vladimir Tismăneanu's text here: http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/senatul-evz-iluzia-normalitatii-comuniste-830796.html. For a more detailed perspective of his take on the contemporary left, see http://frontpagemag.com/2013/vladimir-tismaneanu/back-to-lenin-bolshevism-as-barbarism/. However, what is less known is that Tismaneanu published in 2005 Zizek's *Did somebody say totalitarianism* in Romanian, in one of his collections. He presented Zizek as "one of the most original contemporary thinkers".

[12] Rancière.

necessarily entails a form of questioning the hegemonic history in its entirety, of challenging its pretense to truth and criteria for belonging.

This was precisely the case for *Iluzia*. Initially conceptualized as critical readings of the report itself in fact it ended up engaging critically the entire anti-communist paradigm of post-communism. Instead of simply offering a counter-history of the past, it put into question the very categories through which the past was described.

The Making of *Iluzia*

Given this binary logic of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and exteriority, it is important to note that the idea of putting together a collection of critical readings of the condemnation commission came from a series of bar discussions among intellectual friends. This points at once to the forms of socialization of these friends (which I will discuss in the second section of this chapter) and to the role of bars as alternative, anti-hegemonic and highly political social institutions in Eastern Europe both before and after 1989. There, in the bar, less powerful voices and actors manage to crystalize their experiences and give them a political directionality. The bar is simultaneously a space of leisure (in the sense of taking a step away from work) and one of political subjectivation by investing existence with meaning through common reflection and shared conversations.

In such a setting one evening in the summer of 2007 Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ovidiu Țichindeleanu and Ciprian Șiulea, all making a living as loosely institutionalized writers, editors and translators, decided to put together a volume collecting different critical readings of the condemnation report. Their plan was to bring together contributions that would break the silence surrounding the report after its momentous launching, and therefore to inscribe the report as a piece of public commentary and debate rather than a piece standing in for the history of communism as such. Their critical impetus emerged out of disillusionment with the lack of public debates in the classical liberal sense of shaping the public sphere, but more generally also from a disillusionment with the unquestionable status of the anti-communist Master-narrative during the transition. Their disillusion would render apparent the illusion of anti-communism and its pretenses to power and hegemony.

In the end *Iluzia* comprised 12 contributions and a short introduction by the editors.[13] Most of the pieces are similar in length at around 20 pages each. The texts and the authors represent a complex mixture of styles, topics, attitudes, ideological orientations and trajectories, ranging from liberal anti-communist voices to more leftist and even Marxist interpretations. The book's identity is ultimately offered by this eclectic nature rather than by any unifying ideological stance or theoretical perspective.

While the texts vary from those endorsing the commission's efforts and its main presuppositions to highly critical ones questioning anti-communism as such, they nonetheless share a very careful and patient reading of the full text of the report. This textual focus is important not only because of intellectual honesty and

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[13] Here is the list of contributors: Florin Abraham, Gabriel Andreescu, Daniel Barbu, Alex Cistelecan, Andor Horvath, Adrian Paul Iliescu, Costi Rogozanu, Michael Shafir, Andrei State, Ciprian Siulea, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, Dan Ungureanu.

professionalism (carefully reading a text one criticizes and so on) but more importantly because of the ideological dialogue at a grand scale in which the report was engaged. Addressing the report at its textual level first was important in order to expose the very code of discursive construction on which anti-communism as an ideology rests. To put it differently, this almost positivistic reliance on textual factualness was the necessary precondition for engaging anti-communism from an ideological critical perspective, to re-narrate it as a particular ideology and not as indisputable representation of the past.

Iluzia puts forth three interrelated levels of analysis of the report and of anti-communism more generally: factual, conceptual and politico-ideological. At the factual level it dealt with the mistakes and inaccuracies of the text of the report; at the conceptual level it questioned the mixture of a scientific document with a juridical one; at the politico-ideological level it traced the emergence of the report in the hegemonic right-wing, conservative and high-brow anti-communist culture of the transition period, aimed at legitimizing neoliberal policies and imperial interests.

None of these themes and positions was particularly new in the public space. Previous writings have touched upon most of these issues, including the criticism of GDS hegemony and of the Păltiniş group of intellectuals during the transition years in imposing their own version of the communist past and post-communist agenda.[14] Most of them came from the coordinators and contributors of *Iluzia* in their previous individual writings. I will highlight now some of the most important because they bespeak a particular trajectory of intellectual development and critical articulation.

Genealogies of Resistance to Anti-Communism

Ciprian Şiulea, a philosophy graduate in Cluj, was born in the industrial city of Braşov. He switched to philosophy in 1990 after initially being a student in the polytechnics. After graduation he taught philosophy at a high school in Braşov before moving to Bucharest to work as journalist and translator. He was one of the first to articulate a consistent and uncompromising criticism of the anti-communist establishment and of its conservative, undemocratic and anti-modern core.[15]

His book *Retori, Simulacre, Impostori* is a collection of essays on different themes united, however, by an underlining anti-authority stance in relation to the mainstream ideas of the establishment. He takes issues with the uncritical reception of the interwar generation of thinkers and philosophers after 1989 and the manner in which they were used to legitimate a particular conservative and anti-democratic intellectual tradition, pushing under the carpet their fascist and racist legacies. This tradition is of course mobilized by the Păltiniş school, accused by Şiulea of lacking the courage to assume any open critical position in relation to the post-communist present, preferring instead to secure comfortable cultural positions and institutional control for themselves.

While writing from an almost classical liberal perspective, he is equally critical with the liberal representatives of the post-communist establishment. In one of the chapters he takes issues with the idea, popular in mid-1990s and after, that Romania's

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[14] See Matei.
[15] Şiulea.

trajectory into Europe should be premised upon a good version of patriotism – an old idea of the Romanian liberals seeking to justify their political claims while being the most important owners of the local capital. But Șiulea gives a very short shrift to these ideas: what lurks beneath them is nationalism as primitive as the one of the neonationalists. Moreover, it is still embedded in nationalist ideas developed during Ceaușescu's period: what the post-communist easterners apparently can bring to the western nations during the process of integration is a renewed democratic spirit after the horrors of communism. Because of the material plenty in the West in the last half a century, the westerners need to be reminded about the virtues of democracy. As Șiulea notes, even the Romanian liberals after communism seem imbued by conservative and national communist ideas and have very little to offer intellectually to guide people through the pressures and paradoxes of the transition. A similar fault is identified in another chapter with the post-modern thinkers gaining a voice in the local scene around the turn of the millennium. Their endeavors remained largely aesthetic and lacked a profound political dimension for the society.

An important chapter of the book is in fact a lengthy review of H-R Patapievici's *Omul recent*.[16] If anything, this was *the* book of the Romanian transition, signaling the emergence of a new generation of Păltiniș followers, but more importantly, outlining the contours of the post-communist ideological field: the patchy welding together of US neoconservative ideas and politics with neoliberal and libertarian economic thinking through anti-communism as the irrefutable proof of the murderous nature of leftist politics in modernity. Șiulea carefully exposes some of the most blatant paradoxes and inconsistencies of such an eclectic construction (including some of its most preposterous claims, homophobic and anti-feminist in nature), but also pointing out, as a sign of public pathology, the immediate embrace the book received from the central cultural media, despite its untenable claims.

Consequently, Șiulea's book presents in a nutshell the main lines of force, ideological and political sides and structural differences shaping the first decade of the transition with important reverberations for the second. It also offered *in nuce* the contours of the future criticism and opposition to the hegemonic ideology. Anti-communism is not presented here as an enemy sui generis but as a composite assemblage of discourses, ideologies, persons, institutions and traditions, rooted in present politics and having a long historical trajectory, that cannot be untangled except through an overall social and political criticism.

But if Ciprian Șiulea set the bases for this theoretical and critical approach to the hegemony of anti-communism, Vasile Ernu's first book *Nascut in URSS* had the role of setting the other important pillar: the experiential, biographical and anecdotic dimension.[17] Born in the USSR, as the title of the book suggests, Ernu took part in the enthusiasm and critical openings engendered by the perestroika at the age of 17. He was actively protesting against the regime, which led to his temporary arrest in a couple of occasions. This period would indelibly mark his formation by imprinting on him a certain critical liberal stance in relation to the USSR and to the communist regimes while also revealing the virtues of being exterior to the circles of political

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[16] Patapievici, *Omul Recent : O Critică a ModernităŢIi Din Perspectiva ÎNtrebăRii ʽCe Se Pierde Atunci CîNd Ceva Se CîŞTigă?'*
[17] Vasile Ernu and Sorin Antohi, *NăScut ÎN Urss = RozhdëNnyĭ V Sssr* (Iași: Polirom,).

power. It exceeds the purposes of this chapter to make any extensive remarks about the cultural outcomes of the perestroika, especially for young people like Ernu, but for the present discussion suffice it to note that the formative experience of those years also led to the formation of a particular structural cynicism and a deep sense of irony that characterized Ernu's first book and contributed to its success.

In his book, drawing on different sources, Ernu constructs a composite, acidly funny, ironically nostalgic, humorously cynical and ultimately desperate portrait of living in the USSR and of what came after its collapse. Obviously, the book was instantly dismissed by the anti-communist establishment as being too rosy about the communist past and for fueling nostalgia about a murderous regime. The importance of the book resides in its performative effects rather than in its actual ideas. But it opened a space in which a different reflection about the past was possible, one that also allowed for other sources and topics about the past to be integrated as legitimate objects of research. Music, literature, arts, fashion, movies and drinking habits from the communist past were now re-signified as valid tropes of investigating. The past was freed from the ideological and methodological hegemony of anti-communism with its focus on political personalities, key events and bleak descriptions of death. In a sense, Ernu's book was the moment of discovering the everydayness of communism outside the academic confines of methodological anti-communism. In addition, it paved the way for a certain cultural trend of the transition, at least after mid-2000s: the appearance of the cultural left and of the popular icons associated with this practice, which Ernu exploited fully to his own benefit, claiming to represent the nascent left.

But surely, Ernu's book would not have made its breakthrough had it landed on a barren soil, especially with regards to popular culture. Already around the 2000s a new generation of young poets and writers, breaking with the Romanian post-modernism of the 1980s begun to affirm themselves through direct, visceral depictions of the everyday life and its paradoxes. It was, in effect, a significant cultural turn, making room for the mixture of the high genres of poetry and literature with popular culture productions such as hip-hop, graffiti and even stand-up. Popular culture and everydayness were emerging in the shadows and underground of the mainstream cultural world led by young and pretty angry figures. This was also the moment when Cristi Puiu's iconic movie *Marfa şi Banii* appeared, representing a turning point in Romanian cinematography and leading to the emergence of what later was called the Romanian New Wave. This was therefore a period of iconoclastic cultural effervescence.

Costi Rogozanu was a significant of this turn. Already during his undergraduate studies in literature at the University in Bucharest in the late 1990s, he emerged as a forceful literary critic of the established canon, including the intellectual one. In fact, his first book was a collection of his previous biting reviews and critical discussions, which landed him into trouble many times.[18] His public notoriety came not on the literary field but as a journalist and blogger, known for his uncompromising, "no bull-shit" approach to his writing. Rogozanu adopts a down-to-earth perspective, trying to communicate in a simple, direct and honest way, engaging larger audiences. This anti-cool, anti-elitist manner came out pretty explicitly in the title of his second book,

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[18] C. Rogozanu, *Agresiuni, Digresiuni*. (Iaşi: Polirom, 2006).

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a novel entitled *Fuck the cool*.[19] Coolness is supposed to be replaced by the power of an authentic story, like a punch in the chest. Intimately linked to the ideas of the Generation 2000, Rogozanu was also famed for his references to and analyses of popular culture (from music to movies and books), treated as seriously as highbrow productions, which, of course, shocked the mainstream elitist sensibilities and expectations.

Perhaps more importantly, in his journalistic writings he introduced into the mainstream issues regarding labor and the reproduction of life, which were completely disregarded by the transition right –wing establishment. This created the possibility to link the direct experiences of disenfranchisement and everyday struggle with more leftist theoretical concerns developed elsewhere. With a sociological eye for the transition injustices and paradoxes, Rogozanu opened the possibility for a left politics rooted in everyday and "immediate struggles" and set the bases for a particular type of militantism.

With Rogozanu and Ernu, doing cultural work and producing epistemic forms of various sorts ceased to be the privilege of middle-aged, well-dressed, fat and boring intellectuals living in ivory towers and preaching virtues and morality to the masses. Instead, it became part of a contesting, critical life-style in which matters of form were engaging deep-seated matters of substance and ideological presuppositions. Without knowing each other, Ernu invited Rogozanu to speak at his book launch. It was the moment when members of a new generation were reaching out to each other.

Ovidiu Țichindeleanu was also interested in popular culture for theory construction during his undergraduate studies in philosophy at the university of Cluj. In his own way he was also breaking with the local canon of philosophy, especially that imposed by the Păltiniș school, that linked this intellectual activity solely with reading the established western canon. Tichindeleanu got his PhD at Binghamton in philosophy and colonial studies. His work brings together the perspective of post-colonial studies to the field of post-communism in order to explore from this perspective the repressed roots of Western modernity in general. In his writings he criticized anti-communism as a form of auto-colonialism of Eastern European intellectuals, internalizing imperial and western discourses and expectations.[20]

Moreover, this post-colonial perspective enables a different view of Eastern Europe outside of the Cold War dichotomies of West and East, in favor of a North/South opposition in which the East is glanced at from the global perspective of the South to reveal an entirely different field of forces and struggles. His work earned him praise in Walter Mignolo's latest book.[21] While Țichindeleanu did no publish a book under his own name so far, he coordinated a very important one, exploring the visual level, and its subsequent political and theoretical importance, of the Romanian 1989

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[19] C. Rogozanu, *Fuck the Cool. Spune-mi o poveste*. (Iași: Polirom, 2007).

[20] He is a regular contributor and editor to Idea: Artă și Societate, the most important leftist and critical magazine in Cluj of the transition years. I would say that the paradigmatic publication that expresses synthetically the views of this collective is Adrian T. Sîrbu, Alexandru Polgar, *Genealogies of post-communism*. (Cluj: Idea, 2010).

[21] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity : Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

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revolution, the starting point of anti-communism.[22] In addition to his academic work, Ţichindeleanu was one of the founders of the Romanian version of Indymedia and is a frequent contributor to world social forums.

These various backgrounds, academic interests and public engagements significantly shaped the forms of the critical stances towards anti-communism. The non-institutionalized nature of the main proponents prevented the development of an academic criticism, rooted in bibliography and instead allowed for an engagement emerging from biographical experience and generational consciousness. The adhesion to popular culture and anti-elitist forms of expression and knowledge creation also offered a different theoretical and practical equipment to engage anti-communism while opening this criticism to audiences that remained largely outside the purview of the institutionalized anti-communist intellectuals.

Iluzia was building on this legacy and on these openings, proposing a political engagement rather than an academic refutation of the report and of anti-communism. This was apparent in terms of the style of the contributions and their thematic character, which quickly attracted criticism for their lack of academic wherewithal. But the book elicited contributions from a number of high-profile Romanian anti-communist dissidents, such as Gabriel Andreescu, and other renewed scholars like Michael Shafir and Daniel Barbu. The book managed to make apparent both the internal fissures of the anti-communist camp (with its hierarchy of voices, positions and different dissident trajectories) and, more profoundly, a fundamental split in the local space of knowledge production. *Iluzia* managed to put forth not only a criticism of anti-communism or a different knowledge about the communist past, but also to bring to the fore and to legitimize other modalities, logics and practices of knowledge production, bypassing both the logic of the academic anti-communism professed by Vladimir Tismăneanu and the essayistic production of history-as-memory put forward by the mainstream dissidents and intellectuals.

From Ideological Criticism to Economic Censorship

Despite the eclectic background of the contributors, most of them already published authors with considerable notoriety among a large audience, mainstream Romanian publishing houses refused to publish the collection invoking the fact that the book would not sell. Eventually, Cartier, a small publishing house in Chişinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova, published the book in 900 copies. The authors refused to speculate and call this an open form of economic censorship applied to a form of ideological criticism of the local establishment. It is interesting to note in this context how the Republic of Moldova, while it represents the imaginary mystical place of Romanian nationalism for over two centuries, in practical terms it was the source of much critical and leftist thinking emerging in Romania.[23]

It appears important to outline the mechanisms of the publishing industry not only because it can reveal something about the way in which anti-communist hegemony works in practice, foreclosing and disabling dissent through economic mechanisms, but also because it is the medium in which most of the coordinators of the book struggle to make a living as intellectual creators. In the end, the fact remains that a

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[22] Konrad Petrovszky, Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu (eds.) *Revoluţia Română Televizată*. (Cluj:Idea,2009).

[23] One has to include here the wave of writers coming from Moldova during the 2000s and establishing a different literary style in the Romanian literature.

criticism of anti-communism could only appear in a space exterior to the local one dominated by the anti-communist cultural industry, which raises further important aspects, Gramscian in nature, about the struggles involved in constructing a counter-hegemonic project. It is not sufficient to gather the power to formulate ideological criticisms and counter-hegemonic intellectual construction. For such projects to become successful, they need a material base as well. This is important because it shows how anti-communism is not simply an ideology of some aloof intellectuals, but a very material practice as well, shaping and informing institutions and foreclosing possibilities for making a living.

Anyone interested to find out the exact number of books, their topics and number of copies sold each year in Romania will have to settle with an approximation, at best.[24] By law, each publishing house must report to the Ministry of Finance their annual revenue and profit figures. In practice this does not happen regularly and usually the publishing houses are late to submit these data. The Romanian Association of Editors, a federation comprising almost all publishers in Romania, also in charge of centralizing such information, does not have the institutional capacity to meet its task. Thus an accurate estimation of the size of the publishing market is lacking. In addition, most publishing houses do not have the funds for professional audits and surveys of the market in which they operate while others prefer to do without, remaining in the grey zone of the economy.

The publishing industry in Romania is, predictably, the smallest in Europe with a total revenue estimated at 100 million euros in 2007/2008 at the peak of the booming period, but in sharp decline ever since due to the outburst of the financial crisis, to less than 30 million euros in 2011. All publishing houses (the total number is estimated at 4000, but with only less than 1000 considered active, that is, issuing more than 10 titles a year) must make the best out of a market in which almost half of the entire population never buys books and those who do, never spend more than an average of 4 euros a year (which is basically the price of one book). Under these circumstances, book prints run in the hundreds for most of the average titles, with only some particular titles totaling more than 2000 copies per print.

The biggest problem affecting the industry is distribution. Not only bookstores add almost 40% to the book price for selling the product, but also most bookstore chains hardly cover 30% of the national territory. Because of this situation, most publishers simply try to cut production costs by exploiting their authors, translators and editors. The standard fee for a translator is two to three euros per page, while authors, in the best possible deals, get a maximum of 8% of sales, but 3% is more likely to be expected. However, it is customary for publishing houses to change the terms of the contract after it was agreed and signed, to delay payment and to dispense with the work of professional editors altogether.

Hence, very few translators are able to have a real career in the field, and most simply give up after brief periods of humiliation. They are usually replaced by young students of foreign languages willing to make a living while paying for their

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[24] All the following details are gathered from various interviews and discussions I had throughout the past 4 years with people working in different branches of the publishing industries and with different authors. In particular I would like to thank Florentina Hojbotă and Dragoş Dodu for sharing their inside knowledge.

university expenses, making this segment one of the most flexible and unprotected work forces of the economy, a situation that is hardly discussed due to the customary "culture talk" with which book publishing and production is usually associated. Authors too do not have a better position and is common knowledge that absolutely no Romanian author would be able to live solely based on his/her earnings from writing. Not only the sums are too small, but they also come at the end of the fiscal year, which hardly qualifies as daily reliable income. Whatever profit publishing houses make –a bit over 250,000 euros for a big publishing house in a boom year like 2007 – it is at the expense of authors, translators, editors and other people working in the industry.

Most publishing houses have been trying to address the problems of distribution by opening up their own bookstores, both physical and online, circumventing the monopoly and inefficiency of the existing distribution arrangements. While in the long run these changes might bring more revenue and profits, in the short run the investment has to be funded through cuts or under-investment in the editorial sector.

Apart from blatant forms of exploitation of their employees, the publishing houses also have to refrain from being too adventurous in the market and try out new, different things. In order to maintain a secure source of income and an acceptable rate of profit they have to stick to the mainstream and to the formulas that bring success. There is no secret magic here, only the contours of a self-colonizing industry. By and large, the Romanian publishing houses employ two major strategies: one is to translate easily saleable products (like self-help guides, manuals or very popular literature, like fantasy or policers); the other is more extensive and seeks to secure monopoly on small, but secure sub-segments (for example, that of academic texts, or cook books, etc.). The stability of the business is given not by the ability to innovate (as the standard capitalist rhetoric has it) but by the capacity to successfully reproduce this model constantly.

What contributed even more to the plight of the industry was the fact that starting from around 2008, in order to boost sales, mainstream daily newspapers began to offer a book (or more) with the price of the newspaper. Usually the price was higher than that of a regular newspaper but cheaper than that of a regular book (at under 3 euros). A further advantage was given by the mass distribution possibilities offered by newspaper kiosks compared to regular bookstores, which in fact meant that the cost of production and distribution was even lower. This strategy was aimed at compensating for the losses the newspapers incurred in their daily run. Owners and managers hoped that the profit obtained from selling the books would cover the losses of the newspaper and balance out the budget in the end. This proved to be a misplaced belief since the profit offered by the books could not be maintained in the long run due to market saturation. After three years this model was in obvious decline and abandoned. While it failed to save the print newspaper industry, it further sank the publishing one. The deluge of cheap books easily available skewed competition and regular publishing houses found it hard to compete, both in terms of price and volume. Since

this situation overlapped with the financial crisis, many publishing houses went out of business.[25]

At the same time, it is very hard, if not impossible, to keep track of all the volumes of a publishing house. While the publishing houses know the number of titles they issue in a year and the number of copies they produce, the volumes travel then to different selling locations where mystery begins. The bookshops are not quick, or interested, to send back the information regarding the books they sold and the numbers of copies they still have available. Hence, it is very hard for a publishing house to know the exact number of sales of a particular title at a particular moment and consequently to properly measure its degree of success. Sometimes the press is filled with astronomical numbers, such as sales of 40,000 copies of this or that book, but in practice a book is considered successful if it manages to sell over a couple of thousands. But it is not at all infrequent for a Romanian publishing house to issue a second edition of a particular book, despite the first one not being sold out yet. There is some sense of economic bewilderment when two different editions of the same title meet on the same shelf of a bookstore. In this maze of distribution and haphazard policies it is again the work of authors, translators and editors that is being exploited and wasted.

In this context, the following episode is revealing. In 2005, while working for a central newspaper in the culture department, Elena Vlădăreanu, a young poet and journalist, wrote an article about the best selling titles of various publishing houses, based on data offered by their PR departments. At Humanitas, the best selling title was "*The Code of Good Manners*", followed by some titles in the same thematic area. She wrote the article and the article went to print. But the next day, Elena Vlădăreanu was accused of unprofessionalism for inventing such a list and in the end she had to resign. The accusations came following Gabriel Liiceanu's letter to the editors of the newspaper in which he dismissed the charts as a lie while indicating the "real" best selling titles, incidentally his books and of his Păltiniş friends. The initial email offered by the publishing house with the exact data meant nothing compared to the intervention of this reputed intellectual.[26] In a context dominated by hazy numbers and lack of reliable information, the market hierarchies of bestsellers must mirror that of the ideological hegemony.

One of the reasons for such paradoxes and the lack of interest for more concrete and updated information on behalf of the publishers about the functioning of the market has been a particular special relationship between the state and the publishing industry. The former communist publishing houses were the first to be privatized, some as early as spring 1990. Unlike the big privatizations that followed, the main beneficiaries of these privatizations were not some shady neo-communists turned capitalists, but respected intellectuals like Gabriel Liiceanu who became the owner of the formerly highly-rated *Editura Politica* at which he was a collaborator.[27] The process of privatization was a typical one: in a first phase the publishing house went

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[25] There's a poetic cemetery of publishing houses at every Bucharest book fare. Publishing houses that do no longer exist but still have books in stock gather together a stand and try to sell them for dumping prices.

[26] The event is presented in detail here: http://blog.elenavladareanu.ro/?p=4

[27] Editura Politica was one of the most important publishers of social and political theory, mainly translations. Gramsci, Luckas, Habermas, Heidegger were among the authors usually published there.

into the propriety of the workers employed there, and in a second phase somebody bought the workers out and become the owner. This process entailed severe devaluation of previously existing assets, including in this case copyrighted materials and translations.

After the privatization process, the state continued to offer special tax deductions and subsidies for book production and translation of Romanian titles, but also to directly buy books through special programs.[28] Moreover, the state also offered protectionist measures by heavily taxing the import of foreign books.[29] Therefore, while most of these publishing houses publish authors and books praising the free market, the industry itself is highly dependent on the state to survive and make a profit. One of the outcomes of this situation is the high polarization of the actors in this market, those with better relations prevailing. In 2007 for example, 20% of the publishing houses produced 80% of the titles and, as already noted, top 5 publishing houses banked the largest part of the overall profits.

But a further outcome of these intricate relations of production is, of course, ideological monopoly. Operating in a small market, in a backward country with a poor population, the local book industry managed to avoid the take-overs by multinational publishing giants the other countries of the former bloc experienced. A survey of the ownership of the book industry reveals an industry entirely dominated by local capital. This is perhaps a unique situation compared to other industries during the transition. Disconnected from market pressures, both internal and external, the local owners of the book industry could impose their own intellectual agenda at large. Surely, the Păltiniș members managed to do so more thoroughly and programmatically through Humanitas, the first and, for a long time, the biggest in the country. The others had to follow suit and reproduce this model of success in order to survive, especially on this segment of production.

Note that the 19 members of the condemnation commission constantly publish and collaborate in various forms with the top five Romanian publishing houses. Vladimir Tismăneanu himself is a writer, editor and coordinator at three publishing houses. Rather than being in staunch competition, the publishing houses tend to indulge into forms of compromises and division of labor, seeking to attract the many factions of anti-communism discussed in chapter 2. Anti-communism has been an important component of the publishing industry, offering a significant variety of products to sell, from memoirs, to historical studies to high-school manuals and even to novels. Consequently, the interest of any publishing house is rather to enforce anti-communism than to criticize and disband it, to keep hold of one's in-house anti-communist writers. This is precisely the way in which economic censorship interlocked with the hegemonic ideology of anti-communism to ban *Iluzia* from publication: not in some conscious decision of exclusion (though that is not

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[28] To take a random, but spectacular example: in 2009 the Ministry of Culture offered 100,000 euros for the publishing of two titles at one of the biggest publishing houses in the country. This is a sum that almost equals a year's profit for that publishing house. The generosity of the state in relation to the publishing houses is visible in another example. Most of the publishing houses specialized in publishing raw documents of the communist period from the state archives. While theoretically these documents, once they were opened, are available to the interested public free of charge, they effectively become available only through their publishing by the publishing houses.
[29] Pasti.

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impossible either), but in this fear of losing one's secure market revenue. Since anti-communism is the ideology of transition and always a cultural product in demand – though not as much in demand as anti-communist intellectuals would like it to be- it makes more sense to enhance it than to challenge it.

I checked various charts of the past decade showing different figures of book sales and I have not encountered a single anti-communist title as best seller. Surely, some figures of the anti-communist establishment sell in high numbers, mostly because of their notoriety and publicity. But even so, their most read titles do not deal directly with any of the anti-communist themes. As a rule the best sellers reflect in fact the power of the global book market (like the success of Harry Potter or Jamie Olivier) over the local preoccupations. In terms of overall sales, anti-communist literature is in fact highly marginal in the market. But this is precisely the point: in order to be effectively hegemonic, anti-communism does not need best selling but constant selling, a general background which offers the contours of the local production of knowledge and the decisions for translation and foreign cultural import. Again, anti-communism is functioning like an ideological matrix that guides also economic decisions, rendering them rational and in keeping with scientific market principles. It is, as it were, the ultimate sign of its total prevalence.

What ultimately defeated this logic and its underling monopoly was the spectacular boom of the internet and of the blogging sphere it enabled. This democratized instantly the access to contexts of knowledge production and facilitated the direct interaction between like-minded people, bypassing traditional institutions, like the local cultural magazines and the locally produced books. The grip on the national consciousness enabled by the particularities of the book market was no longer possible in the age of mass internet. But this dramatic change is important not as an empty McLuhan-like celebration of the new media, but because in effect it signaled a wider mutation: the collapse of a modernist tradition of intellectual Bildung and social interaction based on reading a particular canon of books in certain patterned and schooled environments. It was a change facilitating the type of experiences and knowledge production of my informants, resonating with their trajectories of intellectual formation, to which I now turn.

II. Intellectual Formation and Everyday Life

At this stage it is important to specify the relationship between intellectuals, the practice (and idiom) of knowledge production and class. The common mistake when studying intellectuals has been that of adopting a normative view of what an intellectual "is" and what its practice "should be".[30] Zygmunt Bauman was right to note that every definition of the "intellectual" while seeking to be definitive and exhaustive, in fact remains a tautological self-definition.[31] Perhaps a proper way to eschew these traps is to focus on various intellectual *practices*. The view shifts away from reified categories to processes and contexts, from the search of origins to actual transformations. Intellectual activity ceases then to be defined sui generis but as the enactment of a series of particular and contextual epistemic forms and relations, while

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[30] Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens, The Sociology of Intellectuals, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2002, 28:63-90.
[31] In Boyer.

intellectuals are regarded as both the actors and products of this enactment. Consequently, intellectuals become *"producers of epistemic forms"*[32] in localized networks and settings, with a crucial role in securing livelihood and as such a process exposed to the same pressures and challenges as any process of labor. Securing a living, in turn, generates a series of complex patterns of social relations.

Pierre Bourdieu was notoriously very critical of the class-lessness and class-bounded approaches toward intellectuals.[33] While the former paradigm conceptualizes intellectuals as "free-floating", without material interests and needs, the latter tends to inscribe the intellectuals as speaking on behalf of the proletarians and not for them. Consequently, Bourdieu aims to describe the intellectual field as a whole, as an autonomous one, similar to the literary, cultural and economic ones. The field of intellectuals for Bourdieu, as any other field, is characterized by struggles, hierarchies, conflict, subfields and highly polarized material and political interests. In this field intellectuals play a game aiming to secure various forms of capital (cultural capital more specifically, but not exclusively), couched in scientific, "high-culture", objective terms.[34]

For Bourdieu, the history of the field is the history of the struggle for a monopoly of the imposition of legitimate categories of perception and appreciation, just as it is in the very struggle that the history of the field is made, it is through struggles that it is historicized. Because, for Bourdieu, the intellectuals are the dominated sub-class of the dominant class, they will seek alliances with the dominated classes so that to try to universalize their particular positions in the name of their "interest in disinterestedness" –universal values and causes, autonomy from the ruling class, and so on. Intellectuals' self-interest coincides with universal interests: that is, the elevation of particular interests and struggles to the level of universalism as a means to secure the autonomy of the intellectual field. According to Bourdieu's formulation, intellectuals fight on two fronts at the very same time: an internal, fractional battle for (cultural) capital within the intellectual field and a (more or less) collective and external one against pressures from the ruling class. For Bourdieu, the imperative is to unite and win this second battle.

But what if the intellectuals, or some of them, *are* the ruling class? Is not then what Bourdieu describing actually a form of profound class antagonism dislodged as intra-intellectual power games? If intellectual life and production is always about labor and livelihood, then this idea that intellectuals simply fight in order to secure hegemony over the intellectual field and replace others' hegemony misses the point of how intellectual creation is sustained by, an in turn sustains, the reproduction of life. Put differently, just as the conflict between left and right is irreducible and structures the entire social space as a whole, similarly, intellectual positions claiming one perspective or another cannot simply be reduced to a neat game for pleasures of, ultimately, some representatives of the ruling classes, be they the dominated part of it. In fact, what lurks in the background of this analysis is the old distinction between manual labor and intellectual labor.

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[32] Boyer.

[33] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[34] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words : Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

For Marx, consciousness is a social product that evolves historically under different stages of material social organization. These are, critics said, the Hegelian dirty waters we should throw out in order to retain the baby of Marx's writings. I suggest keeping for a moment the dirty waters of the functioning of consciousness. Remember that Marx's criticism of the Young Hegelians concerned the manner in which these bourgeois intellectuals had generalized the epistemic privileges granted by their particular and contingent social position to humanity and history as a whole. Marx's former friends did so, not necessarily because they were duped by alleged Hegelian obscurantisms, but because of a more pervasive reason: the ideological separation –stemming from the social division of labor – between mental (intellectual) labor and material labor. The fallacy, Marx argues, is to consider mental labor distinct from the material one. The standard (misplaced) criticism is that such a view deterministically connects (superstructural) intellectual activity with (basic) material conditions. The real point to be made, however, is that mental, intellectual labor *is* in its very essence material.[35]

Following this redefinition of intellectual activity and practice, note this passage from Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844:*

> "When communist workmen gather together, their immediate aims are instruction, propaganda, etc. But at the same time they acquire a new need – a need for society – and what appears as a means has become an end. Smoking, eating, drinking, etc., are no longer means of creating links between people. Company, association, conversation, which in turn has society as its goal, is enough for them. The brotherhood of man is not a hollow phrase, it is reality, and the nobility of man shines forth upon us from their work-worn figures".[36]

What Marx describes here is the formation of collective consciousness in interaction and through solidarity in the medium of everyday interactions and socialization. "Instruction" and "propaganda" dovetail in fact a collective process of Bildung and subjectification that is inseparable from conviviality.

Franco Moretti has shown that in the 19th century there was an inclination to separate conversation from discussion.[37] Discussion was the partisan interaction constitutive of the public sphere in cafes and salons. As such, discussions ignored as a matter of strict principle any reference to the private condition of the individuals. By contrast, conversation is the sphere of familiarity and privacy par excellence and it takes place between people who know each other well and share a pre-existing history of familiarity and solidarity. Their interaction occurs precisely by virtue of their individuality and familiarity. As Moretti put it, conversation seems to lead away from the rational public debate, which represents the basis of the public opinion, towards a sphere of worldliness and intimacy.

Conversation then is strictly related to the unfolding of everyday life and its mundanity, that is, its contingent and material character. But Moretti points out that

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[35] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism : Selected Essays*, New ed., Radical Thinkers (London ; New York: Verso, 2010).

[36] Text available online at: www.marxists.org.

[37] Moretti, pp. 49

conversation is possible only because modernity introduces a gap between reasoning (in the abstract, philosophical sense) and everyday life. Prior to that, from Socrates to the Renaissance, knowledge and everyday life were intimately connected, indicative of that being the structure of the Platonic dialogues that begin with a mundane question that then leads seamlessly to more abstract questions. In this mode of thinking, experiences in everyday life were elevated to the level of theoretical problems that required theoretical examination.

From Renaissance onwards, this relationship was broken and "*knowledge progressively loses its anthropomorphic traits and becomes incommensurate with everyday experience*". [38] In modernity, knowledge becomes a matter of expert discussion and reasoning and everyday experiences represent a hindrance in this process. This leads to the specialization of knowledge production with its emphasis on expertize and authority of credentials. Consequently, in modernity, knowledge is envisaged as abstract, scientific, universal and public, while the sphere of the everyday, dominated as it is by familiarity, intimacy and subjectivity, appears as its necessary opposite.

Henri Lefebvre in his classic *Everyday life in the modern world* identified the inscription of everyday life as meaningful space and temporality in the Bildungroman of the 19th century. [39] This is a tradition that reaches its peak in James Joyce's *Ulysses* in which, according to Moretti, the "*quotidian steals the show*" entirely. [40] The autonomy of everyday life allows for the development of the individuality outside the pressures of tradition and duty (as in the pre-modern universe in which the everyday was inscribed in the hierarchical order of things) but also outside the pressures of the Protestant ethic of work and public duty specific to modernity and capitalist accumulation. [41] The everyday enables the formation of the individual, and their collective interaction based on mundane, pleasurable activities: smoking, eating and drinking - as Marx put it.

As Braudel noted, ever since the first half of the 19th century for the first time in history, the sphere of the everyday life, previously a closed realm shaped by inertia and bound by strict rules, was colonized by the restlessness of cosmopolitan capitalism. [42] Everyday life, even more than the public sphere of discussion and arguments, became the medium in which capitalism manifests itself and produces most of its effects. The role of the novel, particularly that of the Bildungsroman – which basically documents the coming into being of a person in the medium of everyday life, through various everyday accumulating experiences – was not meant as a criticism of this sphere, but precisely as a medium to amplify and enrich it. The Bildungsroman constituted the symbolic form of modernity, cementing the link between the expansion of capitalism and everyday life.

This relationship is salient for my informants in two distinctive ways. First, their medium of formation, their Bildung, is inseparable from the medium of conversation

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[38] Moretti, pp. 50
[39] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (London,: Allen Lane, 1971).
[40] Moretti, pp. 3
[41] See also Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor : The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
[42] In Moretti, pp. 143

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and its attending forms of sociability. Surely, they also partake in the formal institutional arrangement of formation across the 1989 divide (high-school, universities and so on) but this is not defining for their intellectual subjectivation. This is produced and reproduced in particular forms of interactions outside of these institutions and also outside of the institutions of work. This also explains their penchant for popular culture and forms of knowledge and expression reflecting that ethos, rather than the reliance on a school of thought or a canon. Listening carefully to their interviews and to their stories, this kind of sociability figures prominently, having a significant importance in their formation. In fact, this is their main form of interaction and activity, inextricably part of the intellectual formation and creation, not a distraction. Or, to put it again in Marx's terms, instruction and conversation become one.

Secondly, the reference to the novel, and especially to the Bildungsroman, is important here. A solid literary formation was an essential part in communist education. But at the same time, just like philosophy, it was also a form of rejecting the practical imperatives of the technical sciences, ensuring a practical, secure job. This aspect was even more visible after 1989, when after a brief period of enthusiasm for the humanities their stock plummeted on the job market. The new realities had little use of literary critics and even writers, unless they were able to transform their skills into marketable products by emphasizing their "creative" character. In this context there is something almost utopian and romantic in clinging to this literary interest.

And this is so, despite the relationship depicted above, between the novel (especially the Bildungsroman) and the expansion of capitalism. Precisely this relationship enabled to grasp, and give voice to, the medium of everyday life. It is the medium in which everyday life with its popular aspects appears as an unsurpassable reality and as a problem. Surely, this is possible only at the moment when literature and novels cease to be regarded as elitist stepping-stones of formation and become objects of popular culture, of capitalistic production. This is then what enables us to see capitalist relations as an engrossing totality: not the abstract theoretical perspective but the interaction with the objects of everyday life and popular culture within relations of labor and value.

Conversation is then the medium of expressing this everydayness. During my fieldwork, I participated in such meetings and interactions. My informant friends usually met once a week, either in a bar or at someone's house. Sometimes the meeting was occasioned by a cultural event or talk around the city, but most of the time was simply arranged over the phone. There are certain places where these meetings take place, the most interesting one being the garden of the former hotel of the Romanian Communist Party. Ironically, even though the hotel is placed in one of the most expensive neighborhoods of Bucharest, the prices and the surroundings seem to have remained in the past. This overlap and the contrast it generates is a source of fun but also a symbolic reference to the group's own positionality within the local scene of knowledge production.

What is important to note is that establishing the proper context and background of interaction is salient precisely because the place does not matter as such. It only matters if it offers the best environment for the unfolding of the conversation. The

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participants gather and exchange the usual forms of salute, the conversation usually moves from brief personal updates about the past week or future events. After that, the conversation switches to dissecting the political events of the day. Now is the time when people formulate their opinions and interpretations, share them with the group, argue their positions and reshape their thoughts. It is also the time in which other opinions and interventions of other public actors are reviewed and discussed. In fact, this is the moment in which they make public their own thoughts and interpretations and also seek to get a sense of, and therefore establish, the coordinates of a possible common ground of the group.

There are never trenchant polemics, outright arguments, direct confrontation of ideas: usually the disagreements and the differences of opinion are either conveniently set aside and ignored or, if that seems impossible or impractical, they are carefully approached as a sort of negotiation in which the purpose is not necessarily to convince the other and change his mind but to reveal the common ground inherent to the disagreement itself. In a purely Freudian manner, the uncomfortable truth is usually formulated as a joke or friendly irony. In any case, the ultimate goal of the conversation is to generate a sense of common ground and shared sensibilities –there is no desire for unanimity. In time, the conversation gradually moves away from strictly current affairs to more intellectual and cultural exchanges, involving recent readings, editorial projects, cultural polemics, movies and so on.

The medium of conversation seems then unsuitable for grand ideological ruptures or for revolutionary language and one of the group's main concerns is to express themselves in a language devoid of any sort of radicalisms, excesses and exaggerations. As it were, the radicalism should come from the contextual nature of practices and ideas, not from the language itself. However, I don't mean to suggest by this that the group has a phobia for confrontation or that they lack any sort of revolutionary impulse.

Rather, the ideal of this form of interaction is achieving a balance, a proper measure of things and a good dose of relativity and distance. As such it is thoroughly opposed to the ethics and jargon of authenticity of Heidegger and of the Romantic philosophy for example, shared by the Păltiniş group.[43] The purpose of interpersonal formation is not the encounter with and the surpassing of limit-experiences that test the strength and prove the exceptional character of the hero[44], but the accumulation of diverse and, if possible mostly pleasurable experiences. Personality is then an accumulation of such experiences that can be shared. The point not to be missed here is that this desire occurs on the background of everyday interactions determined by struggles to make a living, which are very rarely pleasurable. As it were, heroism here is placed at the level of everyday survival, not in the realm of some intellectual fantastic achievements.

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[43] For a criticism see: Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston, Ill.,: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

[44] In the case of the Păltiniş intellectuals the ultimate limit was reading the entire work of Kant in the German original in a summer as prescribed by Constantin Noica. See Liiceanu, *The PăLtiniş Diary : A Paideic Model in Humanist Culture*. This cultural tradition was already initiated by Mircea Eliade and his dramatic exercises to curtail his sleeping hours in order to read more.

Their vision is then a thoroughly democratic and popular one, searching for the unspectacular and the un-heroic and relying on universalistic and standardized values. This is the medium in which the idea of equality can take shape. As such it is openly opposed to a vision of society and culture too much imbued with ideas of uniqueness, genius and authenticity. The deep abhorrence of the cultic character, of the stardom, of the exceptional is visible in their preference for the "interesting", not exceptional, characters. They have an interest in people that are able to express the complexity, ambiguity and purely contingent character of life instead of embodying particular strong features of character, or even worse, people who are willing to teach a lesson.

The meaning of life lies in its interstices, its grey areas –that is, precisely those aspects that one can easily talk about in a conversation. As such this is one of the main reasons I believe why they did not fall for the conservative and neoliberal discourse of the mainstream intellectuals after 1989. There is no temptation for eschatology or for messianic thinking. Rather, the opposite trope appears more theoretically appealing: the apocalypse: the end without any further meaning or possibility of interpretation.

These beliefs put them at odds with the language and structure of anti-communism. The emphasis on death, victimhood and sufferance and its melodramatic take on morality that define anti-communism make it incongruent with a disposition towards everydayness rooted in the biographical experiences of communism. The sententious mode of presentation of anti-communism also renders it incompatible with a thinking that cherishes stories with a complex meaning. These two worlds simply could not communicate, could not find a common language. This is why, throughout most of the transition the anti-communist intellectuals and their younger and ideologically opposed critics could not really enter into proper dialogue and generate a larger debate with societal implications. There is no debate to be had because the two worlds are structurally incommensurable.

Raymond Williams noted that in the case of a cultural, intellectual group the small number of people involved and its unbounded-ness makes it unattractive for the standard sociological survey.[45] Furthermore, what most such groups have in common is an internal set of practices, a shared ethos and a more or less distinguishable style, rather than explicit manifestos, programs and fixed targets, which also render them unpalatable for social movements and contentious politics studies. It seems that the cultural group, the intellectual circle of friends is too small, too marginal and too ephemeral to count for social and historical analysis. But what it does, apart from revealing the larger societal processes that lead to its formation, is to offer the possibility of anthropologically exploring the politics of friendship and ultimately the concrete, everyday construction of solidarities at the intersection between, in Hegelian language, the concrete sphere of the family and the abstract realm of the state, or, in-between the bourgeois categories of privacy and public sphere. Friendship should not be understood here as a mediation between the two spheres, a happy synthesis of the two: on the contrary, it is a denial of both, the very insertion of a completely new realm of sociability and universality.

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[45] Williams, *Culture and Materialism : Selected Essays*.

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Eric Wolf defined instrumental friendship as necessarily open and within it each actor acts as a connecting link for the other persons. [46] As Wolf puts it, each person is a "sponsor" for the other, enabling connections and access to resources and other networks. Through these networks then resources are circulated and distributed and shared among participants. Despite their instrumental character of these relations, in order to function properly, they do need to rely on a minimum of emotional feeling or at least, out of politeness, to feign it, to pretend it is there. The affect traversing the network has a fatic function: it keeps the relationship open and it builds trust among the participants. [47]

The members of the collective initially met and came together by developing an instrumental network of friendship, as its members openly affirmed in interviews. Later, their next project CriticAtac also came out of an instrumental need of solidarity against the establishment and for the purpose of developing strong and convincing alternatives. Such a strategy was inevitable in the context of the anti-communist hegemony after 1989 in which the mainstream intellectuals, like the rest of the new capitalists and bourgeoisie, were able to mobilize previous informal networks and relations in order to maximize their positions in the new context. The relations of patronage existing among the anti-communist intellectuals not only helped them build their hegemonic clout but it also led, throughout two decades of transition, to the formation of an entire generation of young disciples and pupils furthering their influence and domination. The only possible way to develop an alternative to this mechanism was a similar set of relations but based on mutually shared interests, goals and tastes and dedicated to horizontal forms of interactions.

Because of its formation as a group of instrumental friendship, the collective appears to those outside of it as a self-enclosed, impenetrable circle of men. This was inevitable: the pathway of formation of the group, and the post-communist structuring structures in which its members were formed, inscribed the "brotherhood of men" with its lax, informal, internal structure but visible outside borders as the necessary form of political and intellectual organization of the transition, suitable to open up an intellectual and discursive space in which the hegemony of anti-communism could be challenged. Surely, it is expected that this form of organization and expression will change once the institutionalization of the group will grow. The online platform, with its different rules of functioning and interaction, already points in that direction.

At a more general level, however, this form of organization and the instrumental friendship it relies upon was the necessary outcome of the neoliberal measures of the transition. In contrast to the Foucauldian inspired analyses of neoliberalism as breeding individualistic and atomized subjectivities, Don Nonini has shown how neoliberalism breeds in fact extended family networks and solidarities as devices to cope with the dramatic effects of these economic rearrangements. [48] When the state is retreating and giving way to the market, the family and the informal networks of dependency and mutuality gain a tremendous importance in sustaining and reproducing life.

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[46]Wolf and Silverman. pp. 175-6.

[47] Ibid.pp. 177.

[48] Don Nonini, Comment: Thinking about Neoliberalism as If Specificity Mattered," *FOCAAL*, 51: 151-153 May/June 2008.

In the case of Romanian communism of the 1980s such networks were analyzed as signs of the secondary, informal market economy developed in the shadows of the official state relations. More generally, they were approached under the rubric of blat and favors specific to the communist regimes.[49] I think this view needs to be readdressed in light of the work on neoliberalism developed in other sites. In the context of the dramatic cuts in state expenditure and imports determined by the need to pay back the foreign loans, these networks were salient for surviving the Romanian 1980s. The new wave of neoliberal measures imposed after 1989 at first fortified these extended family relations, in the context of a profound rearrangement of the economic relations.[50] For example, people who lost their jobs as factory workers necessarily had to rely on their family members still living in the rural area to make a living and a new beginning.

But at the same time, the debasing of numerous families in the process of de-industrialization and privatization also weakened these networks, to the extent that people had to rely now on friends and acquaintances rather then on family members who had little left to offer. Friendship became the equivalent of the family network, and the relations of "brotherhood" they engendered constituted a substitute for the type of relations provided by the extended family. In a sense, these forms of solidarities were easier to build because people who developed them usually shared a similar economic situation or were caught in similar labor relations. This made them naturally "closer" than family members usually living in other contexts and even different cities.

This sort of alliances, solidarities and networks of trust were engendered by the relations of labor in which my informants found themselves after 1989. But, in turn, they determined the type of politics about the present. The struggles to secure a livelihood, with all the adjacent types of relations this process presupposes came naturally at the fore. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

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[49] Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours : Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works : The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
[50] Kalb and Halmai.

6. The Primitive Rebels of Transition

Work today, live tomorrow[1]

In his histories of the *Primitive Rebels,* that is, of the forms of political mobilization of the pre-1848 period, Eric Hobsbawm depicted a series of incipient, small-scale, highly local and quite dispersed movements that pre-dated the more structural forms of labor mobilization.[2] These primitive rebels had a footing in the past while they were also strongly anchored in the present, trapped in between two worlds, not fully belonging to any. Hobsbawm notes that their ideologies were rather inarticulate, sometimes mixing conservative views with socially liberating initiatives, but nonetheless setting the path for future forms of organizations, for example the networks of "brotherhoods" that drew passive masses into activity by their example and isolated initiative. I suggest in this chapter that we can identify such a group of "primitive rebels" of transition in the Romanian network that emerged following the publication of *Iluzia Anti-comunismului* discussed in the previous chapter.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the coming together of these people occurred at different moments in the 2000s as an attempt to counter the hegemony of anti-communism and challenge its politics of memory and history and its ideological underpinnings and interests. Gradually, however, the critical stance of the group moved towards more general issues, engaging in explicit terms the disruptive effects of neoliberalism in the post-communist periphery. Ultimately, this was a struggle for the appropriation of the means of intellectual production and history writing. Hence, it was inevitably highly political and class-based. Since anti-communism was nothing else than the ideology of neoliberal reforms in post-communist Romania, articulated by a cohort of established intellectuals affiliated with the governing class, it was inevitable that the ultimate purpose was a confrontation on this terrain: of making a living and of imaging different forms of society. As such, ever since its inception, this was a movement inevitably biographic rather than sharply theoretical, highly subjective and fragmentary rather than solidly articulate, but which nonetheless was premised on deeply shared values of equality, emancipation and solidarity. Labor and its undergirding social relations have been its focal point of preoccupation and action.

When the category of class was dismissed as irrelevant after 1989 (except for it's utopian substitute, the middle-class, considered the panacea for transition), labor relations were also relegated to the private sphere, simply part of an individual's contract with the employer, thus of no general concern.[3] Concomitantly, the new ideology of entrepreneurialism further concealed the exploitative relations inherent in the labor process, while emphasizing one's own personal capacities, abilities and

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[1] A slogan than appeared in a GDR party poster

[2] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels; Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Glencoe, Ill.,: Free Press, 1960). E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels; Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 3rd ed. (Manchester,: Manchester University Press, 1971).

[3] See Kalb, *Conversation*.

discipline at the expense of more structural relations.[4] Labor was portrayed ideologically as a matter of life-style and career options, a prelude to consumption, and as such it was completely de-politicized and removed from the public view, together with large class segments falling on the wrong side of the transition transformations. Moreover, since communism was rhetorically at least a "workers' state", the transition, now orchestrated by an alliance of second echelon party members and segments of the bureaucratic elite, previously marginalized inside communism, had all the reasons to harshly dismantle all the previous industrial arrangements and to turn the working classes into a disdained legacy of a bygone era.[5] The concept of labor itself was substituted in the public imagination by the "empty sign of the middle class", privileging middle-class relations, such as individualism, competition and pragmatism.[6]

These are the issues I discuss in this chapter. In the first part I explain the trajectory of these "primitive rebels" shaped by overlapping mutations and crises of the capitalist world system in the past 40 years, both West and East. I do so by invoking the categories of precarity and human waste produced by western and Soviet modernity alike and their effects in the present. But by asking questions regarding the production and reproduction of life, this type of politics raises in fact concerns about what does it mean to live a good life, a meaningful life in structural conditions not of one's choosing. I show how the question about the meaning of life emerging during the post-communist transition produces a form of political subjection anchored in everyday personal and group experiences, both local and global. In turn, this awareness of the intricate interplay between the global and the local, and especially its capitalistic nature, allows a redefinition of authoritarianism: far from being the negation of western democracy or a mark of totalitarianism as the democratization paradigm of the transition had it, authoritarianism expresses in fact the structural matrix determining life in capitalism more generally, that implicit social level one cannot vote for.

This in turn raises the question about what constitutes the material, political and discursive resources based on which a new critical, leftist movement can be rearticulated in the post-communist context and its particular immersion in the global system. This will be the focus of the second section of this chapter, where I explore the form leftist politics takes in the Romanian context, away from institutionalized politics, but embedded in everyday life and in dialogue with similar movements elsewhere. There I explore the intellectual legacy such a movement can draw on in a context in which the left is demonized publicly as criminal and the public sphere rewards and encourages anti-communist, conservative and right-wing politics and thinking. More specifically, I show how the emerging Romanian left embraces Marxism as an intellectual tool for making sense about one's life determinants while counteracting the civilizational discourse emerging after 1989 that links normalcy with western integration as discussed in chapter 3.

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[4] Victoria E. Bonnell and Thomas B. Gold, *The New Entrepreneurs of Europe and Asia : Patterns of Business Development in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

[5] Ost.

[6] Don Kalb, The The 'Empty Sign' of 'the Middle Class': Class and the Urban Commons in the 21st century, forthcoming.

I. World-System Biographies: living a life in overlapping capitalistic crises

The Excrements of Transition(s): labor, precariousness and wasted lives

As mentioned in the introduction, instead of seeing 1989 as the *beginning* of transition in Eastern Europe, I see it as the formal *end*-point of a wider process of transition in Eurasia: that of turning poor, backward peasants into waged industrial urban workers in the space of a generation. This process, led by the Communist Party with its political monopoly of the state and the economy, was the Soviet version of the western capitalist process of industrialization, albeit without the bourgeoisie and enforced hierarchically through the Plan. As such, in this process social classes were not at all abolished, but in fact created.

After securing power in the aftermath of the WWII the communist elites pushed down and away the former national bourgeoisies, largely with the background help of the Red Army but with considerable support from the local populations as well, and subsequently embarked on the path of building new societies premised upon the upward mobility of the poor and disenfranchised peasants and the development of mass working class segments and technical intelligentsia. These regimes were from the start geared toward a developmentalist logic. Their aim was progress and welfare, development and modernity. These were very palpable, quantifiable goals, easily measured in numbers - kilometers of asphalted roads, rates of alphabetization, housing units and the like – and less staunch ideological positions vis-à-vis capitalism.

Given the context and circumstances, this process was brutal, at times violent, and largely wasteful. Waste becomes then a useful category through which to understand both the Soviet-type modernization of Eastern Europe prior to 1989 and also the subsequent neoliberal measures devised to undo that legacy during the so-called post-communist transition.

In fact, by emphasizing waste, both human and natural, we can in fact see beyond the apparent rupture of the 1989 moment and discover in turn the continuities that lurk underneath. One such very important continuity is the role economic authoritarianism played both before and after 1989. In both instances the governmental rationality of the state was that of imposing certain modernizing goals: in the communist instance industrialization, urbanization and, in the Romanian case, the full payment of foreign debt; in the neoliberal moment, deindustrialization and financialization. Both unfolded at the expense of wasting human lives.

But in fact, communism and neoliberalism were already linked together at a global scale much earlier. In the 1970s Romania, but other communist regimes as well, already become part of the neoliberal turn via the credit system, signaling a concomitant mutation in relation of production and accumulation both in the western core but also in the Eastern European semi-periphery as I mentioned in chapter 1. Cash-starved by the need to invest in intensive economic growth, the communist countries had to borrow money from the Western banks which in turn forced them to fully open up to the dynamics and crises of the capitalist world system. In 1989, the political monopoly of the communist parties collapsed because they were unable to cope any longer with the global pressures and changes. It was in fact a double collapse: on the one hand the political form of the Party-State and on the other hand

its developmentalist logic, characterized by western blueprints of mass industrialization and consumption. Both were obsolete in the new context of the global system.

Furthermore, observers of contemporary capitalism have shown, in different ways, how capitalism itself is today unable to continue to integrate society into its logic any longer.[7] This global situation was indeed enabled by the neoliberalism's response to the crisis of the national economies in the 1970s.[8] This entailed a three-fold process of deindustrialization, financialization and global expansion coupled with a class war against the working class and labor in general, leading to new forms of enclosures and global labor competition.[9] This in fact constituted the demise of the western capitalist industrialism and its associated political forms and relations. Late capitalism, as it was also called, ceases to rely on industrial national working classes, labor-intensive activities and mass consumption for accumulation and profit. Rather, it thrives based on precarized labor force and temporary relations, deeming workers flexible, replaceable and expendable, while externalizing production to the global south and reproduction to the market.[10] By and large, the new relations of production and capital accumulation render most of the work force surplus to requirements, especially the old traditional industrial class.

Seen from this perspective, the communist experience in Eastern Europe and its aftermath represents in fact the overlapping of three transitional moments: first, a local transition from rural-based economy to industrial relations of production and redistribution (roughly the 1945-1975 sequence); second, a global transition from industrialism as the prime form of production and accumulation to new global relations (the so-called neoliberal sequence of the global capitalist world from the 1970s onwards) and third, a more circumscribed transition, linking the local and the global, that unfolded after 1989 which basically entailed the reincorporation of the former Eastern Bloc as periphery in the new global relations of production, accumulation and empire.

This overlapping transitions across the 1989 divide is the setting in which my informants were born, educated and begun their work in order to make a living. Their familial background and their own personal trajectories are inextricably linked to changes in work and modes of accumulation in the past half a century, both in the communist East but also in the West. Most of them were born between late 1960s and early 1980s, largely in upwardly mobile families, usually benefiting from the rural to industrial transition.

Their upbringing was marked by these transformations but also by an ethos in which solidarities around labor were salient and exceeded the typically bourgeois sphere of the family. This included not only the factory floor per se, but all the rest of the

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[7] See for example, Friedman.
[8] See Harvey. For a wider, more analytical discussion on neoliberalism see the special issue on this topic in *FOCAAL*, 51: 151-153 May/June 2008. See also Don Kalb, Thinking about neoliberalism as if the crisis was actually happening.
[9] Kalb, ""Worthless Poles" and Other Dispossessions: Toward an Anthropology of Labor in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe."
[10] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, A Millennial Quartet Book (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2001).

institutional networks associated with it during communism, like nursery, vacations, sports events, etc. Labor, and all its ramifications, was by necessity a social phenomenon, highly visible and highly central, shaping in direct ways the lives of the people. Through the process of industrialization and urbanization experienced by their parents, my informants lived the typical social life of communism, including mandatory and free schooling, paid holydays and generally, a narrow but firm sense of perspective regarding one's future.

They were highly aware of the shortcomings and waste produced by this mode of production especially during the severe shortages of the 1980s. Though too young to be at the forefront, most were part of the oppositional movement that brought down the regime in 1989. At the time, they were young students or preparing to enter university, but harboring deeply anti-communist and anti-establishment feelings and generally a sense of hope and expectation for the new future.

This enthusiasm soon diminished under the pressures of the new post 1989 realities. For most of them, transition has been nothing else but a long history of precariousness, a constant struggle for decent survival and for making ends meet, navigating between low-paid jobs, in an increasingly exploitative, arbitrary and polarizing system and against the background of a dramatic debasing of their own families' incomes, standard of living and self-respect. This history was further amplified by the type of intellectual labor most of them did (such as writers, translators, editors, journalists and the like), placed at the tail end of the transition's new lucrative hierarchies. As such, beginning even in the student years, they experienced all forms of exploitation, low payment and flexibility, which in turn drastically diminished the distance that historically separates manual labor from intellectual labor, de-mystifying in the process the fetishized, liberal bourgeois vision of the intellectual.

In the long run it created the possibilities and sensibilities for solidarities with other categories of exploited workers. Through their particular experiences of labor and life in post-communism, transition took a distinctly new meaning raising palpable and concrete questions of transitional *injustice* in contrast to the all too familiar anti-communist concern with transitional justice. In addition, these direct experiences managed to utterly shatter the transition dream with its rosy promises always placed in an indistinct future. The present (and the future), more than the past (communist or otherwise), became their real point of focus and concern.

It can be argued that they became what Gramsci meant by "organic intellectual": the person (from *within* the class) that articulates common class experiences in a language comprehensible for their milieu and addressing issues of common concern[11], which inevitably brought accusations of anti-intellectualism, anti-academism and superficiality from their class opponents. Consequently, what binds them together, more than an overarching, clear-cut ideological perspective, is a common generational experience of disenchantment, exploitation and precariousness at the level of everyday life (rather than at a purely intellectual or theoretical level), which under the

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[11] From this perspective CriticAtac represents a major break in dominant modes of intellectual formation, interrupting a tradition that dates back to mid-19th century at the height of the nation-building process, thus too long to tackle here.

exacting pressures of the crisis that ensued in 2008 led to their articulation into an explicit and coherent political and intellectual project that addresses the injustices of the capitalist system through the language of class and from the standpoint of universal equality. This is the CriticAtac project.

CriticAtac is an online publication, inaugurated in September 2010 by the same group of people that edited *Iluzia* and it represented the next step of its intellectual and political trajectory. The goal of the online platform was to articulate a critical space in the local public sphere in order to open it up to other issues, other voices and other angles of analysis of the present, radically different from the intellectual and cultural mainstream dominated by anti-communism. This was an attempt to bring the aforementioned preoccupations with labor and the reproduction of life to public relevance while also offering a more encompassing explanation of the local transition processes embedded in wider capitalist transformations. As such, the appearance of CriticAtac became an "event", re-politicizing debates that previously were framed as cultural in nature and consequently giving voice to widespread feelings of disenchantment and disillusionment that had been muted or marginalized, while also brining class in as a fundamental category of analysis.

If previously the social space was structured between the anti-communist intellectuals and their enemies – that is, a cultural and moral construction opposing the "civilized" and "uncivilized", the "forward-looking Europeans" and the "backward communists" – the appearance of CriticAtac restructured the line of difference between left and right, prompting people to position themselves along this division, while in the process this led to the very redefinition of these concepts emerging from the local post-communist set of experiences. The immediate effect was a split in the local liberal camp, between those who adopted a more critical, leftist perspective and those who remained confined to the dominant political imagination, conservative and anti-communist in nature.

The differences with the *Iluzia* project are notable. Despite *Iluzia* being a critical moment of intervention into the functioning of the anti-communist hegemony, it nonetheless constituted a reactive engagement. It responded to the agenda of anti-communism on its terrain. CriticAtac, by contrast, as the name suggests, represented a moment of positive affirmation, of critical *action*, offering new contours to the social space and changing the terrain and rules of struggle. No longer on the defensive, this was a moment of explicit attack of the fundaments of Romanian post-communism and its intellectual legitimizing devises.

CriticAtac became a platform for a variety of critical perspectives, hosting texts from a broad constituency, ranging from academic to journalistic and popular. Similarly, the ideological direction was also heterogeneous, encompassing viewpoints that covered the whole spectrum from critical liberalism to orthodox Marxism. Moreover, the platform galvanized previously existing critical groups in the margins of the mainstream, from feminists to anarchists, even when some of these groups remained critical of the platform and its focus. Quite rapidly, the platform became the focal point of an emerging generation willing to question the present from explicit leftist positions, while also seeking to offer a new political articulation of their interests within and beyond the local space.

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CriticAtac also reached out to a broader social basis than *Iluzia* did. No longer confined to the level of an "ideological conversation at a grand scale" with the anti-communist intellectuals, the platform managed to attract the interest of and give voice to other categories of people such as trade unionists and working people who could describe their experiences and struggles to a larger audience in a political key. Also, it provided a space where people critical of the communist regime, but who nonetheless remained committed to its initial radical goals, could find again a public voice.

Besides signaling that the rules of the post-communist game dominated by anti-communism had changed, CriticAtac also announced the birth of a genuine non-institutionalized local Left, linked with similar regional and global attempts at rearticulating the Left under contemporary global pressures. While the directionality of this re-articulation did not develop full contours and definite features yet, it is undeniable that CriticAtac significantly enabled this possibility to emerge in the first place.

The activities of the platform are not simply confined to publishing written texts daily. Public events, such as talks, conferences, forums, book launches and TV appearances are also part of the repertoire and together contribute to the consolidation of a local leftist culture that was not only non-existent but also unconceivable at the beginning of the 2000s (more on this below, in the last section of this chapter).

It is hard to predict now the future of this platform and the political forms it will take. What is for sure is that for a while at least it will continue to grow and then consolidate its basis of writers and readers while, perhaps more protractedly, will crystalize a more radical and tightly knitted ideological direction. Most likely, the initial membership will change, making room to new and more people, which will inevitably enable more ideas and activities but will also lead to frictions.[12] Funding will also be an important issue in the next period. The functioning of the platform was possible because of the voluntary work of the founders and regular writers, while small grants from a social democrat German foundation offered the basic income for survival and for organizing events. This model will reach its limits of growth and will necessitate a reconceptualization of the way funds are generated and accessed. This will take the platform into the direction of further institutionalization, perhaps NGOization even, as the example of some similar projects in the region might suggest.

I believe it is unrealistic to expect from this platform and from its initial founders the articulation of a leftist political party or a leftist political movement with electoral ambitions. This will be the challenge of a different generation. I think this is the case not only due to the fact that such forms of organization require a significant social base that is simply absent from the Romanian context, but also because this exceeds the possibilities, interests and formation of this group of intellectual friends. They managed to give voice to an intellectual, cultural and class-based sensibility in a critical form and radically altering the local ideological coordinates. In the post-communist context, this was an uphill social struggle, which was ultimately

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[12] This aspect already started to manifest itself while I am completing this dissertation: new members (including myself) were included while others left.

successful. The way in which the legacy of this struggle and the resources it generated will be morphed into a new form of challenge in the future remains open.

In order to theoretically grasp the trajectory of this group leading from *Iluzia* to CriticAtac, at this point it is important to introduce the basic distinction between exploitation and domination.[13] Since their adult lives have unfolded across the overlapping borders between employment and unemployment, with the various degrees of precariousness and uncertainty in between, relations of exploitation come naturally at the fore, both as lived experience and as object of thinking and intellectual elucidation. These types of commentaries re-inscribe issues of labor and exploitation into the public realm and turn them into issues of collective and general concern, while also becoming central in questions regarding the meaning of life and its liveability.

Ultimately, as the experiences of many of my informants show, anyone is always in danger today of becoming a lumpen or falling between the lines of employability. Thus, the paradigm of domination inspired by Foucauldian analyses of power-resistance and formation of neoliberal subjectivity, their relevance notwithstanding, appears insufficient for understanding the mechanisms determining the production of life, human waste and ultimately death.[14] For, the transition period did not only create new types of subjectivities, relations of dominations and ideological assemblages (the standard Foucauldian tropes), but perhaps more importantly, it also generated a lot of human waste and turned large categories of people, experiences, biographies and hopes into "excrements".[15]

The immediate question that arises here is to what extent this is indeed a new phenomenon attributable to neoliberalism, or to wider changes in the capitalist structure or indeed it expresses a constant of the capitalist functioning and its political ally, democracy. After all, Marx was the first to recognize that "*The whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, therefore upon the constant transformation of a part of the laboring population into unemployed or half-employed hands*".[16] Marx already understood that the dialectical process of turning large segments of peasant population into disciplined industrial workers presupposes not only the concomitant creation of surplus labor power that could keep the price of labor down (the reserve army), but also the creation of a population of flotsam and jetsam with little particular use in production.

Zygmunt Bauman explored this category as a salient outcome of western modernity under the rubric of human waste.[17] The production of wasted human lives is inseparable from the unfolding of the modernity project with its aspirations of order-building and economic progress. In this process, the production of life and economic

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[13] Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital : A Commentary of Volume One* (London ; New York: Verso, 2011).

[14] Paradigmatic for the Foucauladian analyses is Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception : Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

[15] Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject : The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*.

[16] Marx et al.pp. 633.

[17] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives : Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Oxford Malden, MA: Polity ;
Distributed in the USA by Blackwell, 2004).

growth is inseparable from the creation of large categories of redundant populations and ultimately value-less human lives, a relationship examined by Gidwani and Reddy among others.[18] To put it differently, in modernity the creation of life is inseparable from the concomitant production of death and therefore politics is inseparable from necropolitics.[19] Consequently, precariousness and the implacable process of designating particular lives as meaningless and surplus to requirements does indeed traverse the entire history of modernity. I find this focus on the wasted human lives and the precarious status of many human beings falling in between the standard forms of employability and labor very important for understanding the repressed Other of modernity, the faceless urban precariat now constantly growing globally.

Guy Standing believes that we might in fact witness the creation of a new class.[20] It might be too early to tell which shape this class will take and what its dynamics will be, but one cannot deny the larger capitalist trends that seem to point into that direction. This becomes increasingly evident if one approaches the issue of precarity not from the standpoint of classical class theories but from a relational perspective that sees class as a process. Judging from the everyday experience of my informants, precariousness far from being a fixed category that one can trace and identify, is in fact a permanent struggle of avoiding it, of keeping it as far away as possible by all means possible, including political mobilization. Precarity is then a form of interpellation and incorporation of subjects across the traditional class divisions, expressing a *condition* within contemporary capitalism and its mode of production and accumulation: that of disposability, of waste. What Marx and Bauman and others identified as a by-product of modernity and capitalism now seems to be its only true ultimate outcome.

Seen from this global perspective and through this theoretical lens, the life of my informants so far has been unfolding on the background of overlapping global and local crises: the western oil crisis of the 1970s, the austerity program of the 1980s aimed at repaying Romania's debt, the structural adjustments of the 1990s transition and the financial crisis of the 2000s. Together with them we are compelled to ask then: is this a life worth living? Or, to turn the question just slightly: what is the meaning of such a life lived in overlapping crises, capitalistic in nature?

The Meaning of Life as a Political Question

Terry Eagleton started his book on the question of the meaning of life by acknowledging that it is a rather obscene and embarrassing one.[21] One can also add that it seems to be rather conservative too: it presupposes a fixed meaning that can be retrieved with the right epistemic tools.

My suggestion, derived from my interaction with the "primitive rebels" is rather different: the question regarding the meaning of life is precisely the type of political question specific to the condition of precarity and waste in western and Soviet

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[18] Vinay Gidwani and Rajyashree N. Reddy. The Afterlives of "Waste": Notes from India for a Minor History of Capitalist Surplus. *Antipode*. 2011.
[19] Achille Mbembe. Necropolitics. *Public Culture*. 2003.
[20] Standing.
[21] Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life : A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

modernity. Since politics is reduced to the management of bare life and often takes the form of necropolitics, the question about the meaning of life engages directly this zero degree situation, in all its concreteness, materiality and corporality. The quest for the meaning of life becomes then a form of becoming subjectively aware of the structural injustices in an explicit political manner. Such a perspective ceases to expect grand scale forms of political mobilization from the laboring classes –as was the case in the capitalist industrial modernity- but in turn becomes sensible to forms of political subjectivation specific to the current relations of production and accumulation. As such, the question itself becomes the precondition and the very manifestation of political mobilization.

Judith Butler is right to ask "*how to live one's own life well, such that we might say that we are living a good life within a world in which the good life is structurally or systematically foreclosed for so many.*"[22] One needs to face the theoretical and moral task of asking what does it mean to live a good life for oneself immersed within broader structural conditions shaped by inequality, exploitation and effacement. The question about the good life, about the possibilities of living such a life and even the theoretical act of asking it, already pertain not to some idealistic spiritual quest for the purpose and meaning of life, but precisely to inquire into the way the world is organized and structured, to bring to fore the determinants shaping life (and death) and ultimately to ask about the forms of politics enabling a good life.

Butler is right to point out that asking about living a good life one does not only ask about what "good" is –the sphere of morality and ethics- but also, and more importantly perhaps, what is living, what is life and what is a life worth living –that is, the sphere of politics and structural arrangements. The question about good life is then a question about biopolitics.[23]

In *Precarious Life* Butler introduced the category of the grievable in order to discern between the lives who are recognized worthy of protection and endowed with rights and those who are denied such protection and status: the ungrievable. [24] This distinction recasts the question of the living of life as a question about whose lives matter, are worth living and protecting:

> The biopolitical management of the ungrievable proves crucial to approaching the question, how do I lead this life? And how do I live this life within the life, the conditions of living, that structure us now? At stake is the following sort of inquiry: whose lives are already considered not lives, or only partially living, or already dead and gone, prior to any explicit destruction or abandonment?[25]

Butler distinguishes at this level between "social death" – a limit situation in which life is already considered a form of death, a situation best embodied by the figure of

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[22] See her lecture upon receiving The Adorno Prize: *Can one lead a good life in a bad life*, available here http://www.egs.edu/faculty/judith-butler/articles/can-one-lead-a-good-life-in-a-bad-life/. Accessed February 28 2013.
[23] Michel Foucault, Michel Senellart, and Collège de France., *The Birth of Biopolitics : Lectures at the CollèGe De France, 1978-79* (Basingstoke England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[24] Butler. *Precarious*
[25] Butler, *Can one lead a good life in a bad life*

the "Muslim" in the extermination camps depicted by Agamben[26] – and forms of economic disenfranchising, dispossession and exclusion specific to the neoliberal rationalities, or art of governing and administration that she calls "precarity". Precarity helps to differentiate between different modes of unliveability and populations living an unliveable life.

Precarity then, that is life bordering the unliveable and even the ungreavable, is the outcome of the very exercise of power, of the rules of administration and governing, specific to contemporary global processes of accumulation and production. The production of life and death, of differentially valued lives, is inextricably linked with material relations of production as such and their undergirding ideas of value, profit, loss and waste.

The Authoritarian Core of Modernity: structural authoritarianism

In western modernity, the concept of authoritarianism is inseparable from the concept of democracy. The former is supposed to be the absence of the latter; it's violent negation. Therefore, in order to try to understand the concept of authoritarianism we should examine first what we mean by democracy.

Giorgio Agamben noted that "democracy" means two things: the constitution of the body politics and a technique of governance.[27] Democracy designates then both the form in which power is legitimated and the way in which it is exercised. On the one hand, the public domain of law –the politico-juridical order-, on the other hand the administrative practice –the economic sphere of the management of population, to put it in familiar Foucauldian terms.

The western concept of democracy weds together the constitution –the locus of sovereignty and the place of legitimacy – and the government –the sphere of practical government and administration. While interconnected, in the bourgeois definition of democracy the two spheres are not equal, since the constitution is seen as that which structures the body politics as such, whereas the government is seen only as a subordinate technology of executive power. As it were, the management of population is subordinated to its constitution as a body politics in the first place.

This precedence accorded to the constitution is inherently central to the bourgeois liberal thinking of politics, which enabled in the last three centuries of its dominance to think democracy only as pertaining to the level of formal arrangements, primarily in terms of constitution. This leads to a focus on particular set of institutions and practices, such as the disjunction between the legislative body and the executive body, the mechanism of free elections and free ensemble and the disjunction between the public sphere of the state and the private sphere of the family. This deeply ingrained bourgeois liberal way of looking at politics is best discernable in the so-called attempts to export democracy in places supposedly ruled by tyrannical and authoritarian practices. Here, Eastern Europe after 1989 is a well-known case in point.

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[26] Agamben.

[27] Giorgio Agamben. Intorductory Note on the Concept of Democracy In Giorgio Agamben and William McCuaig, *Democracy in What State?*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Note by contrast how for Rancier democracy is irreducible to either a form of government or a mode of social life, in ibid, pp. 76. See also Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Hatred of Democracy*, Paperback edition. ed. (London: Verso, 2009).

But what is left out of this focus on the constitution and formal rights is, of course, the level of economic-governmental rationality. This level is never properly scrutinized in relation to democracy since its function is seen only to implement, administer, and govern based on the constitutional order. Karl Marx was one of the first to challenge these assumptions and turned his critical eye towards the sphere of economic production in order to point out its thoroughly undemocratic character. For Marx, freedom became then not the abstract, formal bourgeois set of relations, but freedom in the precise sense of being divorced from one's means of securing livelihood.

Later, in a different vein, thinkers in the tradition inaugurated by Michael Foucault, have paid increasing attention to the art of governance and the management of population and linked it back to the sovereign level. The very mechanisms of administration and management –considered secondary –were in fact now recognized as highly productive. For these thinkers, the constitution does not bring magically – and democratically- into being the body politics, but what the constitution does is to offer legitimacy to processes of power that control the assemblage and dispositions of populations. The art of government is itself constitutive.

This shift of perspective places in a different light the concept of authoritarianism. Instead of simply designating as authoritarian the formal level of the politico-juridical sphere –as in the liberal bourgeois thinking – a more fruitful way to go about it is to understand it at the level of governing and management –that is, at the sphere pertaining to economic administration and the making of livelihood. In so doing, authoritarianism becomes the imposition of a normative matrix that regulates the making of living, a structural arrangement not of one's choosing. As it were, this is precisely the level one cannot vote for, cannot have a say in it, but which at the same time is quintessential in shaping life and death, or to put it in Georg Lukacs prescient words: "*the radical separation of the concepts of violence and economics is an inadmissible abstraction and that an economic relation unconnected with violence whether latent or overt cannot be imagined*".[28]

Authoritarianism is then the core of democracy, its indelible structuring principle. The management of life and the administration of people and the economy are not open to debate and voting, but are simply exercised based on unequally distributed access to power and resources. What the politico-legislative sphere does in democracy is simply to legalize and legitimize, to formalize as sovereign, this structuring inequality, this power differential.

This level of structural authoritarianism not only casts a different light on the meaning of the concept of democracy –and the various attempts of "exporting" it elsewhere – but also, more importantly, poses with reinforced acuity the question of politics and political mobilization. What is the type of politics capable to address the level of structural authoritarianism? Or, more to the point, what kind of politics offers the intellectual tools and discursive resources to identity this pervasive level in the first place. In the next section of this chapter I will discuss the type of leftist politics that are being articulated in post-1989 Romania by the primitive rebels. This discussion is

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[28] György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, Mass.,: MIT Press, 1971)., pp. 240

important not necessarily because of the rather exotic aspect of this kind of studies, keen to point out the revival of the Eastern European left as a much awaited, and not always credible, awakening from its historical slumbers. Rather, I believe it is an essential topic because of the link it provides between biographical and group experience and politics –that is, linking biography and political subjection – while revealing certain strategic decisions of articulating an ideology out of eclectic sources of influence.

II Rearticulating the Local Left: Towards a New *Manifesto*?

Georgi Derluguian was right to note that seen from a world-system perspective the end of the Soviet modernity renders the capitalist world in a striking resemblance to the pre-1848 situation.[29] Then as now the unprecedented expansion of capitalism entailed with necessity the dialectics between the opening up of spaces to the logic of capital and the enclosing of commons to the benefit of private proprietors. In short, this is the very definition of the post-1989 transition.

But this transition is in fact global and not just specific to Eastern Europe as the paradigm of transitology tried to suggest for more than twenty years. Ever since the early 1970s the capitalist world system has been in transition, or to put it in Wallerstein's terms, at a bifurcation. The field is open but the options available are limited. This is so because the current moment of global transition unfolds in a context in which all previous programs of political mobilization and responses to the global effects of capitalism have been largely discredited and abandoned: Party-State communist modernization, national social-democracy, national liberation movements, and even the "dominant but dead" neoliberalism.[30] Indeed, 1989 is then the belated 1968 of Eastern Europe, its full convergence with global processes.[31]

The decline of previous forms of political mobilization has vacated the space for reactionary and conservative forces, able to mobilize with inflammatory and exclusionary language a repertoire of fear. However, these fears are real and the popular discontent is widespread. On this background we need to look closely at the variety of ways in which people express and articulate their experiences of disruption within this global transition. Don Kalb pointed out that the obliteration of the language of class and annihilation of the left politics have led to the spectacular rise of neo-nationalist and populist politics, both in the post-socialist periphery but also in the core of the capitalist system, as a reactionary way to articulate people's genuine fears and uncertainties generated by over four decades of deeply unsettling transformations.[32]

What kind of politics can be developed on this background and in this context? What kind of politics is really suitable to address the intersection between personal, biographical experience and the global level of structural forces and pressures, becoming manifest in periods of overlapping and continuous crises? These questions gain even more acuity in the post-communist context where the tradition of the left

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[29] Derluguian, op. cit.
[30] Neil Smith, Neoliberalism: dominant but dead. *Focaal*; 2008, Vol. 51 Issue 1, p155
[31] Arrighi et al., *Anti-systemic movements*.
[32] Kalb, *Conversation*. Kalb and Halmai.

was discredited by the collapse of communism in 1989. The range of political options and intellectual traditions is quite narrow and dominated by the hegemony of neoliberal thinking and anti-communism, a scarcity of resources and imagination compounded by the lack of a strong pre-communist Marxist tradition, more so in the Romanian case I study. What are then the resources available, or conceivable, to rearticulate oppositional and critical politics, leftist in nature?

In this section I describe one possibility: the one that is being developed now in the Romanian context by Criticatac. Far from being an articulate, programmatic stance, it is as tentative as the politics of the primitive rebels can allow. But I believe it is nonetheless an important effort that deserves attention, not least because it mobilizes, in creative ways, the legacy of the communist past itself that most, including on the left, tend so often to quickly confine to the dustbin of history.

Atilla Melegh noticed that sometimes in the late 1980s a dramatic transformation occurred in Central Eastern European communist countries. These societies moved away from a developmentalist and modernist logic inherent to their foundation to a civilizational one. [33] The previous efforts to thoroughly transform these societies according to a modernist plan, rooted in a teleological, futuristic and quite utopian understanding of history, gave way to an aspiration to simply catch up with the west, to be part of its realm. While it can be argued that this aspiration can be dated perhaps a decade earlier, spurred by the growing awareness that communism will not be able to outcompete economically the west, the point remains. Radical modernization means now radical westernization, the complete effacement of anything Eastern and after 1989 of anything communist. The western integration is premised on the necessity to become normal, to reach a status of normalcy denied in the past.

These new aspirations and sensibilities have important consequences for thinking politics too. The developmentalist logic entailed a certain blend of Marxism and nationalism in all countries of the former Eastern bloc but also in the global south, spurred by the national liberation movements. Surely, the balance between the two strands was always unstable and articulated differently in various context based on previous trajectories. [34] This was the case for Romania, for example, where the communist regime was as nationalist as the interwar dictatorship and not even remotely Marxist, especially in the last decade of its rule. Once the civilizational discourse kicked in the entire field changed. Marxism and nationalism (sometimes, justly so) became the main enemies and the figures of the non-European past legacies that needed to be urgently surpassed. In Romania, the struggle between the "nationalist-communists" and the "Europeans", at a peak already in mid 1980s, is a case in point.[35] In this new paradigm, politics is basically inseparable from a form of self-colonization: the complete acceptance and integration of anything western and European as a sign of civilization.

This has been the mainstream outlook of the transition, the ultimate imperative, which in turn spurred and legitimated the neoliberal agenda as a means to achieving these integration and civilizational ends. But this ideology was plastic and vague enough to

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[33] Melegh.

[34] Arrighi et al.

[35] Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in CeauşEscu's Romania*.

allow for various, sometimes quite contradictory directions, to coexist. It could easily accommodate both a Habermas-inspired liberal, multiculturalist, legalistic agenda enforced by the NGOs and quantifiable according to EU regulations, but also a very conservative one, that highlighted the Judeo-Christian legacy of the EU for example, or the role of the US exceptionalism (considered as an epitome of the Western civilization as such) in defending the core western values against various "barbarians", especially against communism. Either way, this underlining agreement between the liberals and the conservatives regarding the direction of the society during the transition period left little room for dissenting possibilities while enforcing a deep social consensus. Little wonder then that in Romania pools prior to the EU accession showed an overwhelming popular support for the integration process. Euro-skepticism was virtually unknown and if it existed was de-legitimized as nostalgic and clinging to the old regime.

In this context, any type of oppositional, critical politics and ideologies had to engage directly this civilizational logic. And this is the root of the post-communist Romanian left as it stands today, especially in its more articulated forms. [36] As I already suggested, one important pillar of its formation and public manifestation was the criticism of the hegemony of anti-communism. Anti-communism was both mystifying the communist past in order to serve class interests in the present, but it was also the main legitimating device for this civilizational logic. Therefore, the challenge for the emerging left was to engage it and its undertones of empire and colonialism, without however falling back into the organicist, exceptionalist and protochronist arguments of the far-right and national-communists alike. This required in fact a tremendous theoretical effort in which confronting and re-interpreting the communist past was, once again, salient.

Initially, the resources for this effort were offered by the work of the Romanian Hungarian philosopher Gaspar Miklos Tamas, by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek and, albeit less so, by philosophical ideas coming from the former Soviet space, especially Boris Groys. [37]

G.M. Tamas, a former dissident both in Romania and in Hungary and an outspoken critic of "state-capitalism", offered an interpretation of the communist regime in which the developmentalist goals and the initial emancipatory aspirations were highlighted rather than effaced. This was then a leftist criticism of communism that did not throw away the baby with the dirty waters, retaining the universalist and thoroughly transformative aspects of the initial goals of communism. The experience of state capitalism in Eastern Europe was reintegrated into a leftist tradition that needed to properly account for it, rather than simply dismiss it as a Stalinist aberration.

Similarly, the writings of Slavoj Zizek in this context are also highly important. And I do not simply refer here to his re-valuation of the popular culture through an analytic framework that resonated well with the formation and preoccupations of my informants, as I discussed in chapter 5. Rather, it was Zizek's complex critical take on

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[36] I leave out from this discussion the anarchist left or the feminist left because these movements are still in their infancy locally and have hardly any form of public articulation outside a handful of discreet circles. This is not to say that their work is not tremendously important.

[37] See, Grois.

the communist past, coupled with his constant plea of confronting this past on the very terrain of the left, that offered more grounds to value differently this experience. With Zizek, himself a bit of dissident prior to 1989, this thinking was short-circuited and the Stalinist and post-Stalinist experiences became part of the set of problems concerning the global left after 1989, to which the Easterners could contribute.

The life trajectories shaped by communism, the social world it had created and the aftermath of its collapse all became theoretically rich terrains of reflection and political subjectivation. This resonated with the "primitive rebels" and their peers, who found here a voice for their own experiences. This was something the western left could offer only in limited forms. Therefore, *this* tradition of Eastern European dissidents – highly critical of the regime but also of capitalism– proved formative for my informants and for their future left aspirations.

The double legacy of Tamas and Zizek –in which both played the role of epitomes for a particular Central Eastern European tradition of thinking, writing and being a public intellectual - was nonetheless distorted because of their success among western audiences. Instead of clearly tracing its eastern genealogy and its importance in also shaping the western left of the past decade, it was quickly subsumed to the western academic establishment and left spectacle. This legacy was misrecognized in Romania too by the anti-communist and conservative forces that attributed the re-emergence of the left to people who studied abroad in western universities where they became brainwashed by the prevalent leftist and communist orientations there.

This argument borrowed tacitly from Alain Bloom's *The Closing of the American mind* – very influential in the Romanian conservative circles in early 2000s – that attributed the decay of American higher education on the post-war influence of German leftist émigrés.[38] In this way, the left appeared again as a form of external imposition, a foreign import. Moreover, such a narrative managed at the same time to dismiss any local, grass-root leftist movement, rooted in personal experiences of exploitation and inequality as a fancy, a form of madness or, at worst, insensibility for the suffering of the Romanian people during communism. The local left appeared then as sheer impossibility.

In fact, the opposite was true. While indeed various alliances of students and academics schooled abroad, especially at Central European University, did articulate a brand of leftist thinking in the local context, they remained largely academic in character and did not really manage to attract a wider audience and open up to larger constituencies. Moreover, the public surfacing of this thinking in late 2000s would have not been possible had it not taken place on a ground already firmly established by a local left, quietly growing in the underground from the late 1990s onwards.

The most important place for the emergence of the post-communist Romanian left was the Department of Philosophy at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj.[39] There, between 1997 and 2001 a group of philosophy students, including Vasile Ernu (b 1971), Ovidiu Țichindeleanu (b 1976) and Alexandru Polgar (b. 1976), founded

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[38] Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind : How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
[39] I thank Andrei State for his help in tracing this history.

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Philosophy & Stuff, a magazine dedicated to critical thinking and against the conventions of the mainstream culture. In 1999, also in Cluj, the artist Timotei Nădăşan (b. 1958) founded the art magazine Balkon and published it at his publishing house Idea Design& Print (opened in 2001), which was also publishing Philosophy & Stuff. In 2004, Balkon became Idea arts+society, oriented now towards more social and political issues.

Its first editors were Attila Tordai-S, Alexandru Polgar, Ciprian Mihali and Adrian T. Sarbu. Ciprian Mihali (b. 1967) and Adrian T. Sarbu (b. 1965) were two of the younger professors schooled abroad in French philosophy (deconstruction, etc.) and imprinted a different spirit and language compared to the mainstream directions of the department which made them appealing to such students as those grouped around Philosophy and Stuff. Older professors like Aurel Codoban (b. 1948) –specialized in semiotics- and Claude Karnoouh (b. 1940), a French anthropologist, and former member of the French Communist Party, were quintessential figures in this process of left articulation. By late 2000s, within the Idea group, a new generation of young intellectuals and scholars began to emerge, this time more committed to a Marxist perspective. Alex Cistelecan (b.1979), Andrei State (b.1979) and Veronica Lazar (b. 1984) are the main representatives of this turn. In 2008, Mihai Iovanel, a literary critic in Bucharest, offered them the possibility to blog for Revista Cultura, a cultural weekly, and as such offered more visibility to their writings by engaging a wider audience. This blog functioned as a precursor of CriticAtac platform, anticipating some of the debates and crystalizing a more public, popular voice for the various strands of academic and intellectual left.

When surveying the re-emergence of the Romanian left after 1989 the immediate point that strikes the eye is the total absence of any local left traditions mobilized in this process. Rather than bespeaking a certain self-colonial tendency affecting the left, this aspect points in fact to the complete intellectual deforestation orchestrated by the Romanian communist regime, especially for the left. Romanian communists abandoned Marxism as early as 1948 when Lucreţiu Pătrăşcaniu, the only rigorously trained Marxist of the communist party was marginalized and later put to trial. He was executed in 1954. When Ceauşescu signed his rehabilitation in August 1968, this gesture was only marking power struggles within the party and did not determine a return to Marxist or Marxian politics. In fact, it prefigured an aggressive official policy of nationalism that reached its peak in the 1980s with the vast celebrations of Romanian's antiquity and its superior culture and civilization. The extent to this un-Marxist atmosphere is visible in the example I already discussed in the Chapter 2: Vladimir Tismăneanu could pass as a potential dissident simply by studying the Frankfurt School and the New Left for his PhD. In the interstices and shadow of this party official stance, some Marxist thinkers continued to ply their trade.[40] They did so in areas far removed from the purview of power, such as literary and art history.[41] They had nothing to say about the current society or if they had, they did so in such a convoluted manner that it became incomprehensible.

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[40] Some respected names are Ion Ianosi, Radu Florian, Zigu Ornea, Silviu Brucan, Pavel Câmpeanu, C.Bellu and Radu Cosaşu.
[41] Important exceptions were Câmpeanu, Brucan and Florian who wrote extensively (and critically) about the Romanian society, both before and after 1989.

Marxist and other radical leftist ideas permeated Romania through Budapest at the end of the 19th century. Their resonance, diffusion and political relevance were limited and confined to a handful of urban middle class intellectuals able to purchase and read such texts, available in French or German editions. Some of these intellectuals took upon themselves to translate and popularize these ideas to a broader audience through leftist publications. This was a laudable effort but could not produce schools of thought or sophisticated elaborations of the initial core of Marxism, as it happened in neighboring Russia or Hungary. In the interwar period, Marxist and radical ideas were further submerged in the prevailing hegemony of nationalism and fascism, and in the context in which the Romanian Communist Party was officially banned as early as 1924. After the war, Marx's Capital was published for the first time in Romanian from Russian between 1947 and 1956, in four volumes. But its appearance was subsumed to the overall socialist realism prevalent then, imbued by the exaggerated pro-Soviet propaganda. Marx was reduced to a source of inspiration for Stalin.[42] After the demise of socialist realism in Romania Marxism became a means to ascertain distance from the politics of the USSR,[43] and after the 1968 turn towards national communism, it was largely abandoned again.

What form does Marxism take after 1989? What are the intellectual and political features of the emerging left given this particularly uninspiring historical legacy? As I mentioned above, the appearance of CriticAtac determined also a quest for the redefinition of the Left and of Marxism in the contemporary local and global context. Apart from written texts, this quest took the form of public events in which renown Marxist thinkers were invited to express their views. The guest of one such event was American sociologist Michael Burawoy, speaking on the topic of Marxism after Communism.[44]

Michael Burawoy identified three general approaches to Marxism after communism: Marxism as dead, Marxism as supermarket and Marxism as tradition. The first approach considers that Marx and Marxism have nothing to offer for the present and for the future: they are dead rubber, if they were ever alive. The second approach is keen to take from Marx and Marxism bits and fragments, things that might be suitable for certain particular intellectual and political goals, but without the core of the Marxist doctrine. Marxism as supermarket is in fact post-Marxism and usually more concerned with Communism after Marxism than with Marxism after Communism. Finally, Marxism as legacy acknowledges the Marxist quintessential corpus of writings as the roots of a big tree growing different branches in different directions. For Burawoy it is equally imperative in this tradition to both go back to the roots but also to understand the historicity and own directionality of the various branches of the

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[42] Emir Kusturica captured this aspect brilliantly in his landmark film *When father was away on business*. Meša Malkoč (the father) is sent to the labor camp for making an ironic remark about a cartoon published in the party newspaper portraying Marx reading approvingly a book by Stalin.

[43] Georgescu and Popa.

[44] The event took place on May 31st 2012, at the University of Sociology in Bucharest. The talk is available online here: http://www.criticatac.ro/17095/michael-burawoy-marxism-after-communism-video/. The conference relates to an earlier argument made by Burawoy: Michael Burawoy, Marxism after Communism, *Theory and Society* 29: 151^174, 2000. In what follows I will rely both on the conference and on the text to reconstruct his argument. Burawoy's CriticAtac conference was possible because of the mediation of Don Kalb who suggested this possibility to Burawoy. Kalb inaugurated the CriticAtac events on rethinking Marxism in post-communism with a talk at the Department of Sociology of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj in 2011.

tree. For him, just like Tamas and Zizek mentioned above, Eastern European communism was a branch of this tree that needs to be approached as such.

Burawoy further notes that the roots themselves can and should be looked at historically. At every historical moment a certain part of the initial body of texts produced by Marx and Engels has the capacity to stand in for the whole. Burawoy argues that the best incarnation of Marxism after Communism is *The Communist Manifesto*. In this key text, important both politically and theoretically, Marx and Engels stake out the main tenets of their analysis of capitalism but also of the future coordinates of the communist society. Re-reading it after communism is then highly appropriate.

For Burawoy, the strength of the *Manifesto* lies in certain key statements. First, it foregrounds class struggle as the key antagonism structuring human society across history, albeit the incarnation of this struggle takes different contextual forms in keeping with the modes of production, time and context in which they arise. This leads to the second important point: the historical development from one mode of production to another –highly relevant for the movement from capitalism to communism – follows from the antagonism between forces of production and relations of production. Capitalism is no exception: for Marx and Engels its demise and the arrival of communism is necessarily premised on a future inevitable confrontation between the forces of production it brings into being by its very functioning logic and its encumbering relations of production, most importantly the private property and the private accumulation of surplus. This dialectical relationship has important political consequences, especially regarding workers' mobilization and organization. If the demise of capitalism is scripted into the very logic of its functioning and historical development, then politics become secondary. What is needed then is simply patience to wait for the system to play its course. This has been a core tenet for various brands of structural Marxism in the 20th century, skeptical to the possibilities and chances of success of voluntary mobilization.

But here Burawoy is extremely prescient when he notes, drawing on insights from Marx but also from Lenin's *State and Revolution*, that simply attending to this structural and teleological vision is not enough since it does not take into account the power and role of the bourgeois state. While through its egotistical actions in search for maximized profit every individual capitalist tends to create the conditions for the capitalist demise, the state –the executive arm of the bourgeoisie as a class – intervenes in order to save capitalism as a system at the expense of individual capitalists as such, an aspect already noticed by Schumpeter through his phase "creative destruction". The bourgeois state will always intervene to save capitalism from the capitalists' excesses, sometimes through force, sometimes by conceding reforms to the workers. The validity of this observation has been amply proven during the current financial crisis, when the state intervened in order to save the system from the excesses of the "greedy bankers". Socialism, therefore, can be nothing else than a prop, a state-administered perfusion to the moribund capitalist system.

Precisely because the role the state plays in relation to capitalism and the workers, workers' political mobilization and action becomes paramount. Also, the structural logic depicted earlier that postulates the necessity of communism on teleological bases loses its fundament. Moreover, the state is not only the formal order of

institutions and constitutional power, but also, more insidiously, the level identified by Gramsci under the name of civil society in which consent rather than coercion prevails. The struggle the communists are faced with is not only against state power but also for people's minds. Marx and Engels hinted to these aspects in Part 3 of the *Manifesto* when they went through a series of socialist response to capitalism (feudalist, utopian, German, bourgeois and so on) in order to dismiss them as complicit to the system. Communism would appear then as a fundamental break with the system as such, a new foundation for its functioning. Finally, inspired by the internationalist tone of the manifesto ("proletarians of the world, unite"), Burawoy believes that this is salient for a Marxism after Communism: it has to reach global dimensions instead of simply being confined to national and regional expressions.

The immediate point to be raised here is that Burawoy reading of the *Manifesto* is not entirely historical since he wastes little time on the historical moment of its appearance: the revolutionary days of 1848. But these revolutions were bourgeois in nature, still fighting hard to oust the dominant feudal class in many places of Europe and to claim state power. Similarly, the industrial workers were a rarity for most of Europe outside certain parts of England. Moreover, for most of the revolutionaries, 1848 was by and large a defeat even though it set the stage for later developments, rather reformist in nature than truly revolutionary. This context bears upon the content and structure of the *Manifesto*, especially at the level of ideas that Marx (and Engels) will reformulate several times in the following decades. Moreover, Burawoy remains too attached to the text of the *Manifesto* when he discusses contemporary relations and possibilities. He preserves the fundamental class conflict between the proletarians and the bourgeoisie, essential for the existence and perpetuation of capitalism, but he fails to go into any detail about today's proletariat - fragmented, precarized, dispersed into slums at the edges of the big global cities, de-politicized, disenfranchised and usually mobilized politically by right wing entrepreneurs. Also, by solely focusing on production, Burawoy seems to obliterate other important related phenomena such as reproduction but also dispossessions, enclosures and other forms of extra-capitalist forms of accumulation so predominant today.[45]

However, despite this caveat, Burawoy is right to identify the *Manifesto* as the strategic text to approach Marxism after Communism and ask questions about its future development and forms of articulation. This is in keeping with the dynamics of the Romanian post-communist left and, perhaps, the global one more generally that I will invoke now as a conclusion to this chapter and to the plot of this dissertation more generally.

The key feature of the left revival is the re-invention of the language of class in a context in which it meant speaking the language of the enemy. Class struggle rather than cultural confrontations became the key for understanding the communist past and especially the present of the transition. To the official narrative that opposed the civilized to the uncivilized, the left was able to identify this as a classed discourse in itself. Furthermore, by recapturing this language of class, the left was able to make sense historically of the trajectory of various classes before and after 1989. The

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[45] For an engagement of the literature on this topic see, Don Kalb, **"Worthless Poles"** and other Dispossessions.

destitute working classes, the waves of migration, the pauperization and the frictions of traditions that followed could be traced back to the dynamics of capitalism *as such*.

This, in turn, allowed for the leftists to make sense of their own lives and experiences in terms of class and global dynamics of capitalism, enabling a linkage between their theoretical efforts and their personal biographical trajectories in the past four decades. Marxism became a tool of making sense of the world, of explaining it, while attending to the issues mentioned in the first section of this chapter: precarity, waste and struggles to make a living. Rather than being a dry intellectual toolkit for seeing the world in pre-established categories (as the standard conservative argument goes), on the contrary Marxism and Marxist explanations imposed themselves from within the very lived experiences of the transition, not necessarily in a clear and articulate language, but definitely in substance.

This form of subjectivation changed to a large extent the local dynamics of engaging Marxism. If Romanian socialists at the beginning of the 20th century had to think more of the peasant question in a context in which urban proletarians were few and far between, a century later the questions are entirely different: the urban proletariat was formed and disbanded in the space of less than two generations. This was a dramatic process, with very palpable consequences, that still needs to be properly addressed, both from a theoretical but also political perspective. Labor, in all its aspects, gathers a different significance and status when seen from the angle of these transformations. This is precisely the level where contemporary Eastern European re-thinking of Marxism will produce its most important impact and will contribute to the revitalization of what Burawoy called the roots of the Marxist tree.

Recent global trends on the left –especially the Occupy movement and its underlining ideas of anarchism, horizontalism and direct democracy– found only limited echoes within the local left. The chief reason for this lack of clicking is the belief that these movements fundamentally obliterate the questions regarding the state. In a context in which the state and state transformations had been salient for shaping politics, life and death, a politics that does not seek to address it directly –at least in theory – appears of little value. I believe here one can trace another point in which the Central Eastern European left has something important to say: the reconsideration of the role of the state, both for the local population but also from a global perspective, enabled by experience of these state placed on a trajectory of re-peripherialization[46] and re-primarization[47] during the transition.

One of the strengths of the emerging post-communist left an its renewed engagement with Marxism is its emphasis on the level of structural authoritarianism and the way in which it shapes people's lives and trajectories. While the direction of this awareness and its precise forms of political articulation are still unpredictable and in formation, it does signal that a new 1848 moment might as well be is in front of us. This is why the current struggles of the "primitive rebels", which emerged initially on the terrain of anti-communism, are crucial.

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[46] Hopkins and Wallerstein.
[47] Fernando Coronil in Comaroff and Comaroff.

Epilogue

The focus of this dissertation was the class politics of writing the history of Romanian communism in post-communism, embedded in a wider class history of Romanian modernity. My main argument was that intellectual struggles that emerge on the terrain of historiography and memory in relation to the communist past express in fact larger social struggles about the present and future. The past is inseparable from the politics of the present.

Anti-communism was the main ideological framework of the transition, through which the communist past was approached. Nevertheless, I argued, it was never properly scrutinized scholarly in the field of post-communist and Eastern European studies. In this dissertation I tried to remedy this by explicitly engaging anti-communism as the universal condition of post-communism. This allowed me to shift focus and instead of regarding transition as a distinct historical period, I approached it as a historical problem. As such, transition ceased to be a teleological construction, expressing a transformation from "socialism" to "capitalism", or from "plan" to "market" and instead became a conceptual tool with which to think contemporary global processes in their specific local articulation. This shift opened the possibility to articulate a theory of history and, more specifically, an anthropology of being in history and in time. However, in this dissertation, I could only announce and sketch such a project. There remains a lot of work to be done in this direction.

Such a challenge is compounded by the fact that anti-communism, especially after the fall of communism in 1989, operates with its own theory of history and historical development, which, again, I believe remained under-researched. The "end of history" is perhaps the most well known concept of this theory. But Fukuyama's argument is misunderstood if the "end of history" is reduced to the triumph of liberal democracy and the supposed absence of future conflicts. Rather, it expresses the end of the rational, voluntaristic, revolutionary attempts to radically change the world. Francois Furet, and other anti-communists in this vein, expressed this aspect fully by pointing out that 1989 was the end of a sequence opened in 1789. In brief, the theory of history anti-communism puts forward is not so much about a permanent present without frictions and conflicts within an all encompassing capitalistic and liberal democratic arrangement –there will always be enemies to this construction and to the western civilization on which it is based, as anti-communists are always too ready to accept. Rather, what is truly salient for the anti-communist sense of history is a particular closure of the future. Thorough, radical transformations of the status quo are not only dismissed as utopian but are also framed as criminal and destructive. In this regard, the communist past represents the quintessential example, the ultimate proof that such attempts are necessarily bound to fail while millions are killed and imprisoned in the process.

This theoretical construction guides in particular ways the historical investigation of the communist past. The truth about the communist past (as criminal, as a failure, etc.) precedes and structures historical investigation, which is reduced to the role of substantiating with data and facts an a priori truth. To put it differently, research of the past is subordinated to this a prior truth and to justice. Its role is to mount

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irrefutable proofs against communism and in the process to honor the memory of the victims. The past is then an object of indictment and of condemnation.

These features of anti-communist historiography were clearly discernable in the structure and purpose of the Romanian Presidential Commission tasked with the condemnation of Romanian communism as "illegitimate and criminal" prior to the country's EU accession in 2007. Moreover, the condemnation of communism through this report institutionalized the version of the communist past of the local anti-communist intellectuals and dissidents –dominant during the transition. This was the peak of anti-communism: the moment when it gained political representation and recognition through the presidential institution.

After 1989 anti-communism was the ideology of intellectuals and dissidents operating in cultural milieus, like Grupul pentru Dialog Social, which were in contact with but nonetheless exterior to the circles of political power. Anti-communism functioned as a weapon against the political class of the transition, criticized for its unreformed communist allegiances. Therefore, the communist legacy, with its entangled networks of people, interests and relations, was considered to be the stumbling block to Romania's swift integration into "Europe" and into the "civilized" western world more generally. This served to depoliticize social conflict and turn it into a cultural opposition. Anti-communism also naturalized neoliberalism and called for quick transformations of the society in order to get rid of the communist legacy.

But anti-communism could not have become dominant during transition had it not been articulated with previous class struggles shaping communism. This is why in Chapter 1 I briefly outlined the main contours of communism and embedded this political system in larger modern processes. Without grasping the structuring class conflicts of communism, I believe, one cannot properly grasp the dynamics of the transition period and, especially, of anti-communist hegemony. I suggested that communism produced social differentiation and social classes: not only the working class but also a class of technical and humanist intelligentsia, highly trained in order to serve the purposes of the economy and society, and for whom technical competence rather than ideological commitment became more important. This class remained subordinated to the party and to its centralized structure of running the economy. Politically disenfranchised and economically stifled by the developmental and ideological goals of the communist system, the technical intelligentsia fomented anti-systemic sentiments but it could not organize political representation. The occasion for that was offered by an alliance with second and third echelon party apparatchiks, themselves constituting a younger generation within the party for which the old forms were restraining.

This coalition orchestrated the Romanian revolution and dispensed with Ceauşescu. But it was short-lived. While the former apparatchiks, by virtue of their position, connections and political clout, assumed state power and also monopolized important functions in the state-finance nexus of post-communism, the technical intelligentsia benefited from the neoliberal opening determined by the transition transformations, but remained marginalized politically. This class offered important financial and institutional backing to intellectual anti-communism, which was a tool to make political claims by shaming their enemies in power as neo-communists. This prevented an identification of the neo-communists as local capitalists and instead

displaced class struggle as struggles against corruption, for transparency and for civilization and western integration. The condemnation of communism prior to the EU accession read by president Băsescu in front of the Parliament was the practical expression of this alliance forged between the political aspirations of the former technical intelligentsia and the quest for political and state representation of the anti-communist   intellectuals.

While the internal context played an important part in this condemnation, the international context was also important. The EU eastward expansion after 2004 incorporated a series of former communist countries willing to mobilize anti-communism in order to make political claims within and against the EU. The crimes of communism were mobilized as identity devices highlighting suffering and implicitly the western guilt for abandoning the east to communism after 1945. This perspective, in turn, enabled various foreign policy claims of the "New Europe", aimed at linking the region more strongly with the interests of the US, creating bargaining power at the European level where these states were otherwise quite powerless. From this perspective, anti-communism was empowering for the eastern countries but this empowering meant also the strengthening of a global turn towards neoconservatism and empire, already in full swing with the "War on terror".

I extended this analysis of the social and political origins of anti-communism, and their various local and global imbrications, with a specific discussion of the main features of anti-communist historiography as they became manifest in Romanian history writing after 1989. In chapter 2, by reading the condemnation report as a form of autobiography, I highlighted "history-as-memory" as the privileged form of history put forward by anti-communism. This is a hybrid construction in which history takes the form of memory. Or, put differently, paradigmatic memories and experiences of the communist past –largely those of the dissidents and "victims" -are elevated to the status of a universal history of communism. Rather than displacing the opposition between history and memory, anti-communism substitutes historical investigation with divination since the past in this construction is available only to a privileged few and directly linked with unmediated experience.

In chapter 3, by discussing the phenomena of nostalgia and the emphasis on the mnemonic values of the museums of communism within anti-communism, I linked in fact history and memory again, this time by taking a view from the perspective of the struggles unfolding on the terrain of memory. By framing nostalgia as a disease of the popular classes still trapped into the communist past, anti-communism elicited in fact the need for a pedagogy of memory. This pedagogy entailed the institutionalization of "history-as-memory": that is, the substitution of popular, alternative memories with the history written by anti-communism, based, as I mentioned, on a series of elected and selected memories. In this process, the role of the museum of communism is salient. It allows dramatic representations of the past to be imagined and displayed, directly instilling feelings into the visitors, and the museum also functions in itself as a sign of civilization, as a clear mark that the communist past was surpassed, left behind and archived.

In the same constellation, the archive of the former secret police discussed in chapter 4 acts as a further source of knowledge for the anti-communist historiography and for its pedagogy of memory. This is so because the archive of the secret police was

inscribed with the possibility to generate truth about the communist past and endowed with the power to help making moral decisions in post-communism by clearly distinguishing perpetrators and victims. This magnified the status of these files out of proportion, leading to struggles for privileged access to their content and to what I call "a cult for the occult", generated by the desire to know what is hidden in them. Furthermore, the opening of the secret police files prompted those who were the object of surveillance to give an account of themselves, to offer a justification and a confession. This further intensified the (auto)biographical focus of post-communism, enhancing the powerfulness of "history-as-memory".

In contrast to this approach I suggested a different one: instead of seeing the secret police archive as a source of knowledge I proposed to look at it as a form of knowledge and read along its grain. This enabled me on the one hand to embed it into wider modern practices of state legibility and population control, while, on the other hand, to trace the genesis of this institution to the class struggle for knowledge undergirding communism.

These case studies clearly show the salient role of class in relation to struggles about the communist past. This is why my research was so much about class, which I tried to conceptualize in the Introduction as a relation linked in this context less with material possessions but to shifting positions within overlapping fields of force, contention and struggles for hegemony. This aspect was further magnified by my analysis of the struggles against the hegemony of anti-communism. When *Iluzia Anti-communismului* appeared, a collection of critical readings of the condemnation report, more than a purely intellectual endeavor, it signaled in fact the appearance of a generation willing to voice its own experiences of the communist past in order to open up a discursive space in which their present realities could be expressed differently. Rooted in the developmental legacy of communism and the patterns of formation it both enabled and repressed, the critical stance against anti-communism made visible its functioning during the transition and questioned its hegemonic character.

This contestation was put forward by a group of intellectual friends united by a common pattern of formation prior to 1989 but also by a shared trajectory during post-communism. In chapter 5 I depicted the everyday interactions of this group, which constitute both the medium in which they articulate their political stances, but also the resources for their criticism. Conversation, friendship, conviviality and the refusal of a language of authenticity made possible their solidarity and represented the stepping-stones for their political subjectivation.

In chapter 6 I continued this exploration by turning to the politics of the present this group developed after the publication of *Iluzia* and its contestation of anti-communism. There I showed how their own experiences of post-communism, marked by precarious labor conditions and very concrete struggles for making a living, rekindled a focus on issues of labor and reproduction, which in turn elicited concerns with transition injustices. By taking a longer historical view and tracing their generational biography from the late 1960s onwards across overlapping transitions and crises, capitalistic in nature and global in scale, I argued for a view that sees precarity as a contemporary global condition, while making a case for re-thinking

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authoritarianism as a structural matrix shaping life, rather than the mark of the absence of democracy.

These preoccupations became the driving impetus behind the CriticAtac project, a critical online platform, which emerged in the wake of the *Iluzia*, explicitly seeking to articulate a post-communist local left. While the full directionality of this endeavor remains open, its main outlines are already present: rearticulating class politics and class idioms that will enable to grasp contemporary global dynamics of capitalism in interaction with similar movements elsewhere. CriticAtac managed to re-politicize the public sphere and offer it different contours by introducing a new line of division: instead of the cultural opposition between anti-communists and their opponents – characteristic of the transition period –, a political opposition emerged in which capitalist social relations in all their complex articulations become central again.

These are the broad contours of the story I told in this dissertation. But it is a paradoxical story. While chapter 2 opened with the triumph of anti-communism through the official condemnation of communism, the end of chapter 6 anticipated some of the pathways the local left will travel into the future after piercing the ideological dominance of anti-communism and turning it from the undisputed master narrative of the transition into the expression of particular class interests manifested in the fields of historiography and memory. The peak moment of anti-communism was rapidly followed by the strong affirmation, for the first time in more than 50 years, of a Romanian Left, linked with other efforts elsewhere and in a context of global capitalist crisis. The high moment of its power proved in fact to be an illusion.

One of the reasons for this paradox resides in the very structure of anti-communism, already mentioned in Chapter 2. Anti-communism was strong while it could claim exteriority in relation to political power. Once the junction was made, it lost its main source of strength and became subordinated to political power. This also happened around a time when the celebration of the fall of the Berlin Wall overlapped with the deep crisis of capitalism that unraveled some of the basic promises and tenets of anti-communism, especially the link between capitalism, democracy and prosperity. In short, if at the beginning of my research communism was dominant, at the end of writing this dissertation, communism appears "dominant but dead" - to invoke here Neil Smith's description of neoliberalism. In this context, it is perhaps important to outline here, instead of a definitive conclusion, some of the main developments of the local field after my fieldwork ended and also to suggest tentatively what might be expected in the future.

The final nail into the coffin of Romanian anti-communism came during the 2009 presidential elections. While president Traian Băsescu was re-elected mobilizing again a very strong anti-communist agenda against his "neo-communist" opponents, the victory was narrow and surrounded by widespread suspicions of fraud. The claim that he and his party would do things differently than the former communists proved another illusion. Entrenched with party politics, anti-communism could not claim an exterior point in relation to it anymore and instead became vulnerable to political struggles and frictions. This overlapped with and magnified the divisions and struggles already shaping the anti-communist camp that I discussed in chapter 2. By and large, two major sides emerged, opposing Vladimir Tismăneanu and his followers to Marius Oprea and his peers. Their major bone of contention revolved around the

control of key institutions, even though this struggle was couched in theoretical and methodological differences regarding the research of the communist past. This bitter struggle discredited both camps and significantly reduced the moral power of anti-communism. From the unsurpassable horizon of the transition, anti-communism was reduced to an object of quarrel among intellectuals, with little, if any, interest to broader constituencies and publics.

At the same time, methodological anti-communism remains strong in the study of the communist past. The main tenets of anti-communist historiography identified in chapter 2 are still dominant and inform most of the historical accounts of communism. Most likely, this dominance will continue, given the solid institutionalization of anti-communism in research institutes, universities, publishing houses and museums, which offer powerful incentives for researchers to reproduce its main tenets. This is compounded by an international context in which the field of mainstream historiography is shaped by a conservative and positivist turn, especially in relation to the communist past.

The increasing accessibility of files from the archive of the former secret police is most likely to prolong the dominance of anti-communism in history writing. But these files lost the power to generate scandal and arrest the public attention through their "revelations". As such, they will remain confined to the realm of scholarly investigation. This promises to generate useful sources of data, geared towards research purposes and less to political interests. As such, this will remain an attractive genre for publishing houses, given that the low cost of production ensures significant revenues in times of crisis. The boom of (auto)biographical reflections on the margin of these files seems to be subsiding, but it remains to be seen if this will allow the space for more critical and metahistorical engagements with the secret police archive.

Just like anti-communism, the anti-communist intellectuals and dissidents also lost their significance and status following their entanglement with politics. Some of these intellectuals remained for a while close to president Băsescu and his political agenda. But after 2009, in the context of the crisis and the demise of anti-communism as a symbolic and electoral resource, their usefulness for the political power holders vastly diminished. Sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists served political purposes better, by mobilizing scientific and social arguments for the austerity measures. For example, the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Bucharest was the main architect of the presidential proposal to cut pensions by 25% and increase the pension age. He was also the person around which a new right-wing party, spearheaded by the President, articulated in 2012. Anti-communist intellectuals and their ideology seem to be a thing of the past, at least in party politics.

In this context, some of the anti-communist intellectuals embraced even more pronounced conservative positions, hoping to recapture a little bit of their former stature and moral stance. They attacked the President from these positions after years of supporting him and his measures. But at the time of writing, this strategy seems of little success. Their occasional interventions in the public sphere are usually waved off. Radical Orthodox thinkers, able to stir peoples' imagination with a mixture of eschatological promises and spiritual solutions to everyday realities, appear to replace them in the public sphere, dovetailing a wider societal shift towards conservative and extreme right positions.

This conservative turn will be the main challenge to the emerging local Left. Apart from its internal dilemmas regarding organization, growth and further institutionalization, the Left must face the growing wave of conservatism and orthodox fundamentalism. But old and new liberals already started to frame this danger in a civilizational language underpinned by a repertoire of fear in order to enhance their own positions and reclaim front stage.

The left, having regained discursive vitality but so far lacking a significant social basis, remains still too fragile to be able to mobilize and organize politically in more consistent and effective forms and faces the complicated task of having to fight two battles at the same time: one against the new conservatives, and another one against the liberals who use this upsurge in order to tone down, again, more radical and anti-capitalist agendas. The context of global unrest and critical social movements springing everywhere might tip the balance towards the left but the outcome of this struggle, just like the global ones, remain open.

These dynamics occur nonetheless in a context of deep economic, political and social crises, capitalistic in nature. Walter Benjamin wrote that a materialist historian does not seek to know the past "as it really was", but seeks to look at the past as if the past was referring to the present situation, as if it was speaking to it. The question then is not what we can learn from the horrors of the past in order not to repeat it again, but on the contrary, how does our current situation appear from the perspective of communism and its promise of emancipation and liberation. This becomes then a true account of the past and a proper historical stance: our present is not the outcome of past events, but also, and perhaps most importantly of the events that never happened, of the missed opportunities and crushed potentials in the past. In this way the return to the past is by necessity a glance to the future, an attempt to enact those unfulfilled promises. In the last analysis then, post-communism is in fact a reason for hope: not the end of history but precisely the beginning of it, a fresh attempt to offer solutions to our current predicament. But only time will tell what the outcome of this struggle was.

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