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Western Imaginary and Imagined Defence Strategies of Eastern Europe and its Borderlands

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Abstract
The following paper[1] discusses how the Western imaginary or the way 'the West looks East' reinforces the construction of 'unstable' or ambivalent identities in the New European countries and their borderlands. Particularly, it deals with the Western discourses that locate Eastern Europe and its margins in the ambivalent state of spatiotemporal transitionality, and explores possible defence strategies of the latter. The author roughly divides the abovementioned Western discourses in the stigmatising and enlightening ones though both imply a certain type of stigmatisation. Furthermore, Eastern Europeans' two extreme strategies of 'symbolic escape' are discussed and a question is posed whether they can help avoid stigmatisation. Based on the author's recent cross-cultural research among the youth in Romania, Poland and Georgia, it is illustrated that the strategies of 'symbolic escape' can cause further stigmatisation and reinforce a failure discourse characteristic to the representatives of these countries. Finally, the paper discusses Romanian, Polish and Georgian young people's strategies of cultural resistance.

Key Words: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, youth, discourse, stigmatisation, nationalism, bricolage.

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1. Introduction

In the following paper I attempt to contribute to highlighting the issue of the controversial processes of integration and division, of blurring and consolidating borders, and of growing sameness and lasting difference. I attempt to illustrate how this duality provokes a new politics of ambivalence in the New European countries and their borderlands, locating these societies in the ambivalent state of spatiotemporal transitionality.

It is a widespread assumption that borders are becoming fuzzy and that never was the shifting of places as easy as nowadays. Usually scholars bring an example of the European Union (EU). Despite this fact, the discourse on 'Fortress Europe' has gained a new insight today. How is it possible that in the conditions of the ongoing EU enlargement the frontiers of Europe are constantly consolidated? How is it possible that the countries that have managed to return to their 'Mother' Europe after the collapse of the communist regime need to constantly prove their Europeanness, while those remaining on the margins of Europe desperately try to persuade the European 'core' that despite their peripheral position, they still belong to Europe because of their historical and cultural heritage? The cases of Romania and Poland, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other hand, represent wonderful examples of attempting to prove one's Europeanness both when it should not be questionable any more (as Poland and Romania are the EU member countries) and when it is still questionable (as Georgia is not part of the EU).

I got especially interested in the youth discourses about EU integration and EUropeanisation in the light of EU membership/non-membership. For this purpose, I have conducted a qualitative social research (June 2010-December 2011), namely, in-depth interviews and focus groups with the youth aged 17-25 in Georgia, Romania and Poland. I have conducted 50 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi, 33 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Romania - Bucharest and one of the main cities of Transylvania - Cluj-Napoca,[2] and 14 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups in Krakow as the old capital of Poland, which is believed to have always been experiencing the Western influences more than any other part of the country. The collected data were transcribed and submitted to the qualitative content- and discourse analyses.

In what follows I describe the main findings of my cross-cultural research. I aim to illustrate how the EUropeanisation discourses provoke a new politics of ambivalence responsible for upholding ambivalent identities that constantly negotiate between the EUropeanising forces and the national. In order to make sense of why and how these ambivalent or 'unstable'[3] identities are constructed, it is necessary to get familiar with the 'Western Imaginary'[4] and the way 'the West looks East'[5] as the latter does encourage particular discourses and respective responses to/strategies against them in the New European countries and their borderlands.

2. Stigmatising Discourses and the Strategies against Them

What are the Western European discourses about Eastern Europe and its margins? Citing just one of the famous examples that is the already classical work by Maria Todorova, most of the scholars researching recent developments in the Eastern European countries (Elias, Taras, Melegh, Kiossev, Goldsworthy, etc.) agree that the West invents the 'Eastern other' as its 'opposite' and through this discourse the West 'essentialises' the Eastern identity.[6] Different narratives can be applied to back this 'essentialisation' up and the Western 'inventors' are especially concerned by being tactful in this regard, therefore, these days the most widespread narratives would probably be the one on 'the idea of an ongoing transition... to an ideal social form [though] postponed into the indefinite or localized out of the reach of the locals'[7] or a 'philanthropic idea' of supporting the upward movement in the name of civilisation.[8] One could think of other types of narratives or even sub-narratives though it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss them but to show their impact on the construction of the locals' perceptions of the Westernising/EUropeanising forces. Therefore, I will try to unite these narratives in some wider categories roughly dividing them in the following two groups: The stigmatising discourses and the enlightening discourses (though both imply a certain type of stigmatisation).

Under the stigmatising discourses I imply those that voluntarily or involuntarily result in a negative labelling of the representatives of Eastern and Central European countries, or those located even farther on the periphery. One of the examples of the stigmatising discourses is the abovementioned 'othering' discourse*,* which views societies in the light of descending civilisational scale and emphasises the difference between the so called 'new' or 'emerging' European countries and 'real,' 'old' Europe.

Another example of the stigmatising discourse is the 'asymmetrical' discourse, including the one of EUropeanisation, which is

> asymmetrical enough to silence all those somehow denied membership of that 'universally valid' community... This asymmetry alone and the emerging binary oppositions are powerful enough to deny a 'real existence' to those who are in a midway or bottom position on such a scale.[9]

What are the strategic responses of the targets of stigmatising discourses, that is, how do they try to 'respond to these vicious games of inclusion and exclusion'?[10] Concerning the 'othering' discourse, Todorova presented a comprehensive analysis of projecting the stigma and the accompanying frustrations on those located farther to the East and, as a result, Orientalising them, while simultaneously Occidentalising oneself as the West of the 'other.'[11] A wonderful example of such a response is presented in the publication by the Federal Trust entitled 'The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond' (2006). In the chapter on 'Romania and the Future of the European Union' the author talks how important Romania as a political agent is to the EU because of its 'cultural and geopolitical belonging' to Central Europe, and because of its neighbourhood with both Eastern Europe consisting of Ukraine, Moldova and Russia, and 'South-Eastern Europe (the Balkans), where Romania has a tradition of intense contacts unburdened by hatred and conflict.'[12] In addition, Romania is presented as a real supporter of 'Turkey's accession to the EU, as well as that of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and of the Western Balkan countries.'[13] Thus, here is an attempt to push the borders of Eastern Europe farther to the East and to exclude oneself from both Eastern Europe and the Balkan region.[14] We can also see an attempt to present oneself as a peaceful country, 'unburdened by [ethnic] hatred and conflict,' and ultimately, more civilised than the Balkans; finally, not yet being a member of the EU itself, Romania is nevertheless considered as such an 'important political agent' within the EU that it already promotes other less important agents' (located farther East and South-East) incorporation in it.

The 'asymmetrical' discourse provokes its own strategic response as well. As the main danger connected to it is 'to silence all those somehow denied membership of that "universally valid" community' (which is represented by Europe), the ones 'in a midway or bottom position' desperately strive to gain the European status and to prove that they are genuine European societies. 'On a "sliding scale of merit" no one should want to be out of "Europe" and social and value patterns it represents or, more precisely, is aligned with.'[15] Therefore, Romanians need to constantly reiterate: 'We are Europeans' or 'We are a part of Europe.'[16] Poles emphasise their 'national uniqueness [that] reinforces Poland's attractiveness vis-à-vis the European Union' even in their parliamentary speeches.[17] Concerning Georgians, whose European status is rather questionable, they need to persuade both themselves and the outsiders: 'I am Georgian, and therefore I am European!'[18]

However, in order to sound more persuasive, they have to convince the powerful European players that the latter are in need of the Eastern, Central, South-Eastern or more peripheral regions on the margins of Europe. One of the vivid examples can be found in the same paper by Severin having the following conclusion: 'Romania needs the EU as much as the EU needs Romania' and alongside the trivial idea that 'what is good for Europe is also good for Romania,' presenting a new truth that 'what is good for Romania is good for Europe.'[19]

A similar case from the Polish reality can be found in the Polish politicians' discourses on 'Polish national mission in the EU' before joining it. This mission is considered essential for the EU itself and the politicians argue about Poland's 'preferential treatment' by the EU implying that

> due to its exceptional mission and national uniqueness, Poland must be treated by the EU in some special, less demanding way... differently than, say, other EU candidate countries.[20]

A corresponding example can be brought from the Georgian reality represented by the discourse on Georgia's strategic importance for Europe as a potential energy supplier with the pipelines stretching across the country, providing Europe with the gas from the East and competing with the Russian monopoly over gas. In Georgians' mundane discourse, Europe is often pitied for having to play by Russian rules in order to survive cold winters, and the alternative energy projects, in which Georgia is considered to be a 'corridor' for supplying Europe, are ascribed a missionary value.

3. Enlightening Discourses and the Strategies against Them

Besides the stigmatising discourses, or rather alongside them, there are quite powerful enlightening discourses, which I would call the euphemistic forms of stigmatisation. The enlightening discourses aim to 'enlighten' the New European or not-quite European societies and to transform them into 'real' democracies of 'true' Europe. One of the examples is the 'civilisational' discourse, which implies that Europe (or more precisely, the EU) has a cultural mission of cultivating 'true European values' among those to be transformed into 'real' democracies. Consequently, EU accession (and the accompanying EUropeanisation process) is believed to be 'the most authentic form of modernization.'[21] It turns out that usually the main supporters of this discourse are local intellectual and elite groups, who may 'continuously argue that "Europe" brings "tolerance" and "rationality" into our not truly "European" country'[22] and may constantly complain about their country's inability to properly encompass and enact European values and modes of life, starting from the distorted forms of individualisation, ending with the poor quality of toilets on Hungarian trains. Thus, the 'civilisational' discourse is translated into the 'elitist' discourse within local settings. The scholars researching this topic bring various examples of the local intellectuals' call for abandoning 'irrational' or 'unworthy' local customs and for 'the rejection of "Eastern" local nationalism'[23] drawing a clear line 'between the image of the "national" as past and "old" and the "European" as "future" and "new."'[24] Furthermore, they consider EUropeanisation as the only means of overcoming the 'backwardness' of their population. Some authors go even further and state that 'from time to time the local intelligentsia openly called for the help of the West – in their wording – "to colonize" the local population.'[25]

Thus, certain perceptions are constructed, spread and backed up through the abovementioned discourse, particularly those that the locals have various 'unworthy' customs, which should be abandoned in the name of civilisation; that the locals are usually 'backward,' therefore, unable to promote desirable developments in their society and are in need of someone from outside to teach them; and that the locals need to reject their local nationalism, which no doubt is 'Eastern' (whatever meaning it has), and should move to the post-nationalist state in order to catch up with 'true' Europeans as the Western European countries have already stepped in the post-nationalist era.[26]

A prevailing strategy against such discourses, which emerges within certain segments of intellectuals themselves, can be traced in the New European scholars' critical reflections on 'the East-West slope'[27] and more recently the Western scholars' discussions of 'socially constructed' or 'imagined' borders between Western and Eastern Europe, which could hardly be taken down because of their ‘intangible’ or ‘ephemeral’ nature,[28] as well as the volumes aiming to illustrate that the Eastern and Western European nationalisms have never been as divergent as it is believed.[29] Furthermore, an entire volume can be devoted to the identity studies from the local perspective to articulate critical self-awareness and verify the power of local self-reflection against the need of being taught from outside.[30]

4. ‘Symbolic Escape’ as a Solution?

Now let us discuss the folk defence strategies against both the stigmatising and enlightening discourses as in fact these two are closely intertwined because of their overt or latent stigmatising character. Such defence strategies are sensibly summarized in Kiossev’s paper under the subtitle of ‘the dominant strategies of (dis)identification.’ He describes two ways of ‘symbolic escape’ representing two extremes: The first strategy is ‘radical emigration... [alongside] cultural amnesia’ and the second one is ‘passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride.’[31]

To start from the first strategy, it is not a secret that lots of people from Eastern Europe migrate to its Western part, especially after their countries’ joining the EU, as the crossing of borders has become much easier, while Western Europe provides more job opportunities and pays better. Based on the author’s interviews, the Poles talk a lot about their compatriots’ vast migration to England and Germany; the Romanians produce the same narratives about their compatriots’ massive migration to Italy, Spain and France. Descriptions of their experiences of staying abroad are amazingly identical: Polish youth regretfully admit that ‘people do not have a good opinion about’ them in Britain and Germany, while Romanian youngsters disclose that they have ‘a bad name’ in Italy, Spain and France. Thus, the ease of crossing borders can be considered both a success (new opportunities to study and work) and a failure (stigmatisation by a recipient society). It is remarkable that the failure discourse related to migration is missing only in two interviews conducted in Romania and one interview conducted in Poland.

The following two examples represent the Romanian and Polish young people’s narratives related to their trips abroad:

> When I am in Germany, I try to speak German so that people think I live there for a long time and I am part of their country, because I have a family there and my cousin told me: When you speak Polish here, they think you are stupid, they want to go away from you, etc. Some people abroad are ashamed of our country.[32]

What struck me in this narrative was a sudden shift from the first to the third person. My respondent did not conceal that she avoided revealing her nationality in Germany though could not openly admit that she was among those who were ashamed of their own country. It seems national sentiments are quite strong even when individuals are ashamed of their nationality.

> Many Romanians are ashamed of their national identity because of their compatriots' behaviors abroad. This is what happened to us in Italy: We were the Erasmus program students and were going to organize a Romanian party, four of us. But suddenly there was that episode of a Romanian or Gipsy [*pausing here and emphasising that either could be*] crime against an Italian woman and we were in panic. We immediately started speaking English instead of Romanian because our parents would call us and say: 'Don't speak Romanian! Otherwise some angry Italians might be around, understand you speak Romanian and take revenge!' It was the first time we experienced a racist issue... There was a sudden hope when the Pope appeared on the balcony in Vatican and preached about tolerance. You feel a kind of relief but then you hear some people were beaten in a supermarket just because they were Romanians. As the Erasmus program students we were supposed to exchange the values and be proud of it, and the weekend we spent was really scary![33]

Here, again, my interviewee does not say anything about her being ashamed of her nationality; rather it is a story of being scared of an offensive treatment by the recipient society. However, returning to the very first sentence in this paragraph and realising that the rest of the paragraph is the evidence for the first sentence, which actually represents the main argument, it becomes clear that the whole story was meant as an example of 'Romanians [being] ashamed of their national identity' because of what their fellow Romanians or maybe even Gipsies (often perceived as the ones spoiling Romanians' name) do abroad.

Alongside sharing their stories of staying in the Western European countries, the young people also share their strategies of avoiding stigmatisation. Polish respondents disclose with a sad smile or an ironic tone how they desperately try to adopt the British accent after a few months' stay in Britain; moreover, how they try to even speak Polish with the British accent! Romanians confess with the same sad smile or the same ironic tone that while staying abroad they try to hide their nationality; moreover, that sometimes they even pretend to be Italians!

I would argue that these desperate attempts could represent a defence strategy against the Westerners' discourses on how after joining the EU several hundred thousand Eastern Europeans are on their way to 'invade' Western Europe, which is well evidenced by a caricature from one of the British newspapers depicting a long line of trucks with the signs: Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, etc. and a large poster on the borderline saying: 'Welcome to London, equal crime opportunities for all!'[34]

This is one of the numerous examples of the Eastern Europeans' representation in the Western discourses as the criminals responsible for most of the recent ills occurring in the peaceful and democratic societies of Western Europe. But can imitating the British accent or pretending to be an Italian help avoid stigmatisation? Most probably it causes double stigmatisation (from both one's compatriots and the citizens of a recipient country) and its accompanying failure discourse characteristic to both the Romanians and the Poles (and probably other 'Easterners' as well).

The second type of 'symbolic escape' is considered to be 'passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride.' As illustrated above, it is assessed as a purely 'Eastern' phenomenon, as the scholars have a general agreement on the fact that the Western European countries live in the post-nationalist age. And even if there are expressions of nationalism in Western Europe, they are still more acceptable than the similar phenomena in Eastern Europe viewed through the dichotomy of 'civic' (or 'Western') and 'ethnic' (or 'Eastern') nationalisms, the former 'characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive,' while the latter 'glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive.'[35] However, as noted elsewhere, 'a key difference between civic and ethnic nationalism is that the latter is usually undertaken by insecure ethnic groups.'[36] And even if some authors trace the recent revival of nationalism or 'backdoor nationalism' in Eastern Europe, they argue the EU is largely responsible for it. For instance, Fox and Vermeersch state that 'Contrary to expectations, the accession of the EU's newest members did not sound the death knoll of nationalism in the region; rather, it signalled its reinvention and, in certain respects, reinvigoration.'[37]

The expressions of 'passionate nationalism' and the 'hyperbolic pride' intertwined with it can be found in different kinds of 'identitary concerns.' A. P. Iliescu describes them based on the example of Romanians and states that such 'an identitary obsession... frequently prevails in Romania' and is represented by such traits as 'focus upon "glorious" past events,' 'the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities [that] leads to encapsulation of "Romanianism" in a certain distinguishing feature,' the emphasis on 'being special' and 'different from others,' 'a tendency towards self-celebration,' as well as 'identitary fear... that one's identity could be affected (forgotten, altered, modified, etc.) by what is going on around (on the continent, in the whole world, etc.)' exemplified by Romanians' complaints about the attempts of ethnic Romanians' 'Hungarization' in Transylvania or 'Russification' in Eastern Moldavia.[38]

A very similar 'identitary obsession' can be traced among Georgians. The 'focus upon "glorious" past events' is the most common feast narrative in Georgia; 'the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities' exemplified by the narratives that Georgians have a unique alphabet that creates its own language group, that Georgian polyphony is one of the most ear-pleasing, that Georgians are one of the most hospitable nations, or that Georgian food and wine are one of the best in the world, which make Georgians' most common everyday discourses, does present 'Georgianness' as a distinguishing characteristic; the emphasis on 'being special' and 'different from others' is not alien to Georgians either and there is even a popular saying: 'All of us, who are the best, are Georgians.'[39] And although this popular expression is perceived in a humorous way, the one on 'Georgia as a Mother of God's land' is a dominant religious as well as mundane discourse of the country. The abovementioned narratives on Georgia's victorious past, Georgia as the first Orthodox Christian country being under the special protection of God's Mother, Georgians' famous hospitality and marvellous food and wine, etc. provide a fertile ground for special pride and 'self-celebration.' Finally, Georgians have the same 'identitary fear' that their 'national spirit' can be endangered by the ongoing rapid socio-cultural transformations, by the globalising forces, by various religious sects and denominations coming to the country and threatening the Georgian Orthodox beliefs, etc. But the two most alarming threats are represented, on the one hand, by the powerful northern neighbour (Russia) that has been trying to subordinate Georgia for two centuries and, on the other hand, by certain Westernising forces that, despite stimulating some positive changes, might be harmful to the local traditions.

The Poles would probably echo this discourse in a somewhat modest way. Analysing Polish political discourse since 1989, Krzyzanowski observes that it is characterized by

> the topos of national uniqueness, frequently paired with the topos of definition of the national role [that] appears to have the main role... the topos of national history is invoked to support the said uniqueness of Poland and portray Polish collectivity as exceptionally experienced throughout its history, and, therefore, as able to substantially contribute to the creation of the new Europe and its identity.[40]

In addition, 'identitary fear... that one's identity could be affected... by what is going on around,' even if it relates to the EU influences (not to mention the Russian factor), is not alien to the Poles either. To return to the Polish political discourse in the recent period, it seems to underline that

> Poland must remain conscious of the non-ideal character of the EU as the object of collective aspirations and motivations: it emphasizes that Poland must always remain watchful of its national interests irrespective of the developments within the EU.[41]

The author of this paper has also revealed the expressions of 'passionate nationalism' in the in-depth interviews with young people from the New European countries though both Romanian and Polish youngsters believe they lack national sentiments. They think it is especially visible now, when 'a very strong idea of the united Europe has been promoted' and many young people consider their identities European rather than just Romanian or Polish, which can shadow the feeling of national. As Anita (aged 19) has put it: 'I still feel that I am Polish but some people just forget about that and they want to be European; they try to be European and forget about their roots,' or to quote Alina (aged 24):

> I think we [Romanians] somehow lose our identity. It is bad for the country. We have to be more nationalistic... I think we should be prouder of our culture, our values. We start forgetting about these things and adopting the Western or, as we say, European ones.

However, there are some respondents who admit that after their country joined the EU, they have become more nationalistic:

> After joining the EU I have become more nationalistic than I was before. When you feel that you are a perfect market for the developed countries to sell their products and, in addition, they make you believe that it is only you who benefit from them, that before you were not civilised, and that you are a true European now, it's hard not to become a nationalist.[42]

Another respondent sharing the very same concern that the EU makes Romanians believe that it is only them who benefit from belonging to the EU, calls it 'European hypocrisy' suggesting everyone to be aware of it 'for our own sake.'[43]

Concerning Georgian youth, the in-depth interviews reveal that despite being positive about EU integration (that is also illustrated by the recent nationwide surveys[44]), they are nevertheless concerned about its side effects thinking that as a result, Georgians' national sentiments, particularly their national pride and self-esteem, might be harmed:

> Joining the EU will probably be beneficial in the economic terms as it might bring more investments; however, I am afraid, we will have to adjust to lots of different regulations that are alien to our country. I guess it will cause lots of objections and at least the inner protest of Georgians, who cannot stand being controlled, especially from outside, and consider it a form of subordination harming their self-esteem and pride.[45]

Furthermore, despite the fact that Georgian youngsters consider themselves quite nationalistic, they still state that 'the epoch of being pro-Georgian has not started by now'[46] calling their peers for action to 'protect our deeply cultural from the outside attempts to demolish it'[47] and to preserve the 'national spirit.'

Can 'passionate nationalism' be an effective means of escaping stigmatisation? Quite contrary, it evokes further stigmatisation being viewed by the post-nationalist West as an expression of chauvinism, racism, and xenophobia, and usually results in various kinds of 'external conditionality' reinforced by 'a strong bargaining position' of Western Europe.[48] For instance, it can be represented by the sanctions of different severity for the already acquired EU members or by a warning for the countries hoping to ever be incorporated in the EU structures that their integration will be postponed to an even more indefinite future.

5. On the Local Way of Doing Things

The imagined defence strategies against the stigmatising and enlightening discourses discussed above represent the ways of 'symbolic escape.' However, the youth from the New European countries and their borderlands not only search for the 'symbolic' solutions to challenge this reality but also apply the actual strategies of cultural resistance, represented by retraditionalisation (modern representations of the traditional) or cultural bricolage varying from rediscovering the local, even copying the local, to creatively mixing the Western, predominantly EUropean, with the local.

On the one hand, there seems to be an attempt to copy a lot from the West, especially, from the EU, whose standards and norms the presented three countries try to follow; while on the other hand, there is an obvious attempt to do things the local way, which predominantly implies a kind of bricolage[49] - a mixture of the local with the Western. The youth discourses evolve along the same line: On the one hand, they complain about imitating the West and copy-pasting everything Western. The common perception that everything Western is considered to be 'of a better quality, more modern and civilised' is assessed by my respondents as a 'local mistake.'[50] Consequently, they call for a 'selective incorporation'[51] of the outside elements. On the other hand, they stress their own ways of combining the elements from different contexts, making the point that although not all the examples of bricolage can be considered successful, they still represent their attempts to do things their own (local) way and to keep or invent 'specificity.'[52]

The first and most common strategy of cultural resistance emphasised by the youth from all three countries is 'rediscovering' the local:

> Now a popular trend is to rediscover our own. You know, now all of us are into bio stuff and lots of women I know are

> rediscovering their mothers' or grandmothers' recipes... and this is searching in the traditional, I guess.[53]

Alongside 'rediscovering' the local in everyday life, the young people bring a number of examples of such a rediscovery from painting, music, cinematography, etc. For instance, Irina (aged 24), herself an artist, states that in response to copying the Western, a few years ago young Romanian artists started copying the local. She brings an example of the Cluj School of painting, which is characterized by a specific style and distinctive features such as the emphasis on social issues, expressionism, the domination of black and white colours, etc., and can be immediately identified as a Romanian style. She thinks that young Romanian artists tend to imitate the Cluj School as

> the whole Western style of painting became not just boring but so common that by going back to the national style one wants to be not unique but, you know, somehow special, not common.

Andrei (aged 25), a film director, talks about the same strategies in cinematography noting that Romanian films have a very specific and quite outstanding style easily recognizable as Romanian with its realistic and naturalistic emphasis, long talks, rather shaky camera, less care for technical aspects and more care for how feelings are transmitted, etc. He argues that Romanians can benefit a lot from the Western support but then they can always do things their own way, even if it does not imply only successful cases:

> I think we are in a good position, where we try to take money from the EU and it's not by chance I am saying this first. We don't take good examples, we just take money mainly and at the same time, we keep our way of doing things, and this comes with good and bad examples. Even though we are European, we are still very, very much Romanian!

Alongside rediscovering the local, there is also a trend of creatively mixing the local with the Western. It seems the Western cultural trends encourage improvisation and result in a culture-specific bricolage reflected in the modernised representations of the local. The respondents bring a lot of examples of such a bricolage from various areas of social life, including fashion, food, architecture, painting, music, etc.

According to my Georgian respondent Irakli (aged 21), a DJ at one of the popular music clubs: 'I may use the Western cover to decorate my Georgian sketch but it always remains Georgian and I am extremely proud of it!' Some young people even state that combining the Western and Georgian has its historical roots, that the Georgian-European bricolage, exemplified by 'Shin,' 'Zumba,' 'Assa-Party' and other Georgian performers today, has started in the 19th century, and that 'Georgian academic music itself is a product of the combination of European music with Georgian folk.'[54]

The Romanian and Polish respondents recall similar examples stating that their cultural traditions, say, traditional music, can be a powerful means of stressing the local and resisting the Western, especially the Western musical styles dominating the music scene in the world. One of the most often cited examples among Polish youth is the group 'Zacopower,' which presents Polish folk songs and music in a modernised way, that is, 'combining it with the best elements of modern Western music';[55] while Romanian youngsters often mention the group 'Fara Zahar' ('Without Sugar'), which 'adapts the Western-style music to the local reality and uses lots of irony and sarcasm to present the social aspects of Romanian life.'[56] This is how glocalisation works: by adopting the Western cultural elements and combining them with the local ones, especially the folk ones,[57] in a culture-specific way, so that the 'reworked traditional themes provide the basis for innovative and adaptive responses to outside influences.'[58]

Besides those cases of bricolage one can be proud of, the young people also recall less successful cases of bricolage. Although some assess them as failures and some perceive them as shameful, they tend to believe that these cases might still represent the strategies of cultural resistance.

Georgian youngsters confess that there is a fashionable trend of being intelligent they try to follow, which is more an image than a true aspiration, and they share a number of cases when they spend a whole day at a literary café, as if they were getting familiar with the latest fiction though they might stare at the same page for hours, or when they take their own comics to a university library and pretend they are getting familiar with academic material. One of my Georgian respondents commented on this trend:

> I have a feeling it's a kind of response to this political project of 'enlightening our youth' though you would ask: why such a distorted response? I would reply: It is fetishism, a mock on our politicians' obsession with promoting these Western-style educational standards, which stays on the surface and doesn't really go deeper. Maybe it's not a very successful attempt but it's a specific way to cope.[59]

The corresponding examples can be traced among Romanian and Polish youth. The often cited case of Romanian bricolage is 'manele' – a 'trash pop, which originates from Turkish-Arabic roots and combines all these strange elements from elsewhere, including the local Gipsy music.'[60] As the plot of manele is usually about money, women, expensive cars and houses, most of the young people perceive it as shameful though quite often they confess that despite the fact that their peers would commonly refuse that they listen to manele, many of them still do. The young people think that manele can be descriptive of the Romanian reality though not in a sense that 'Romanians have all these golden things and expensive cars, or they possess the mansions in Spain, but these ideas and their respective attempts can be seen in the society.' Nevertheless, they state that 'this kind of music rejects the impact of Western culture in a way.'[61] To cut it short, we can conclude that manele, with its carnival characteristics, might represent the resistance to the Western-style order and rule through its emphasis on the 'barbarian' elements and its attempts to reverse the normality (the same way as carnival reverses an everyday routine). It might have a deliberate shocking effect, consequently, being used as a means of cultural resistance.

Another example of a 'strange' bricolage from a very different sphere of life though still applied as a means of cultural resistance can be found in the Polish reality, namely, the Polish way of managing a socio-political routine. My Polish respondents share the following observation:

> After the collapse of the communist regime we were desperate to adopt everything Western; then we found out that the actual Western didn't coincide with our ideal of the Western and our expectations were not met. Now, searching for the solution out of this difficulty, we have invented a very strange thing - we have combined the Soviet and European bureaucracies, which is a dangerous combination but we have tried to find our own way.[62]

Thus, based on the abovementioned discussion, there can be various strategies of cultural resistance the youth from Romania, Poland and Georgia apply, from rediscovering the local, even copying the local, to mixing the local with the Western. Despite the fact that not all the cases of bricolage can be considered successful, it turns out that even the 'strange' examples of bricolage can be applied as a means of cultural resistance insomuch as they represent the local way of doing things. However, the question remains whether these strategies of cultural resistance alter the actual situation resulting in the decline of failure discourses in the presented three countries or whether they are as much imaginary as the ones of symbolic escape.

6. Conclusion: On Ambivalent Identities

On a sunny autumn day I was sitting in a park in front of the sociology building of Bucharest University together with my respondent Elena, a PhD student of sociology. She was talking about two types of Romanian discourses resulted from EU integration: The official one, as she called it, which avoided focusing on the national identity attempting to stress how great it was to be part of the EU and the folk one that, in her words, revealed both disappointment in the EU (with the accompanying national sentiments) and the shame caused by being Romanian while staying abroad. It seemed from her narrative that the official discourse gained popularity (even if it did not sound authentic to many Romanians) because the folk one (even if it represented the actual reality) made them feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. Therefore, the Romanians, especially the younger generation, did their best both to avoid expressing their national sentiments and to articulate their pro-European attitudes. Elena perceived herself, like most of her peers, as a proof for this argument. However, when the interview ended and we started chatting about the local folk songs and dances, some of the local holidays and certain cultural traditions, Elena gradually got so passionate that finished her discussion with the following sentence: 'Now I realize I am a nationalist. Yes, definitely yes! Da, da!'[63]

Notes

[1] The research has been supported by New Europe College, Institute for Advanced Study (Bucharest, Romania) sponsored by the VolkswagenStiftung.

[2] According to the popular Romanian saying, the border between Western and Eastern Europe lies through Transylvania.

[3] Dusan I. Bjelic, 'Introduction: Blowing up the "Bridge",' in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dusan I. Bjelic and Obrad Savic (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 15.

[4] Attila Melegh, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 31.

[5] Vesna Goldsworthy, 'Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization,' in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dusan I. Bjelic and Obrad Savic (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 35.

[6] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[7] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope,* 20.

[8] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994).

[9] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope,* 30.

[10] Robert Bideleux, 'The New Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: The Limits and Divisions of Europe,' in *Nation and National Ideology – Past, Present and Prospects* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2002), 35.

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[11] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans.*

[12] Adrian Severin, 'Romania and the Future of the European Union,' in *The EU and Romania: Accession and Beyond*, ed. David Phinnemore (London: Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2006), 109.

[13] Ibid., 107.

[14] Just to compare this vision of Romania's location with the one in Encyclopedia Britannica, here is the definition from the latter: Romania is a 'country lying in the eastern half of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe.' Accessed February 15, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/508461/Romania

[15] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope,* 30.

[16] Vasile Boari and Sergiu Gherghina, 'Old Essence, New Flavors: Searching for Identity at National and European Levels,' in *Weighting Difference: Romanian Identity in the Wider European Context*, ed. Vasile Boari and Sergiu Gherghina (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 13.

[17] Michal Krzyzanowski, 'On the "Europeanisation" of Identity Constructions in Polish Political Discourse after 1989,' in *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Aleksandra Galasinska and Michal Krzyzanowski (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 104.

[18] A popular expression by a former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania that quickly enjoyed wide acceptance among the Georgian public.

[19] Severin, 'Romania and the Future of the European Union,' 112.

[20] Krzyzanowski, 'On the "Europeanisation" of Identity Constructions,' 110.

[21] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope,* 118.

[22] Ibid., 114.

[23] Ibid., 115.

[24] Krzyzanowski, 'On the "Europeanisation" of Identity Constructions,' 107.

[25] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope,* 115.

[26] Robert Bideleux, 'Introduction: European Integration and Disintegration,' in *European Integration and Disintegration: East and West*, ed. Robert Bideleux and Richard Taylor (London: Routledge, 1996).

[27] Melegh, *On the East-West Slope.*

[28] Ray Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 2.

[29] E.g. the whole volume edited by Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski and Andrej Marcin Suszycki, entitled *Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010).

[30] E.g. *Identity Studies*, vol 1, 2009. Accessed March 3, 2010, http://www.identitystudies.ac.ge/index.php/IStudies/issue/view/1 This volume

represents the first joint attempt to reflect on the peculiarities of Georgian identity by a group of rather well known and influential Georgian social scientists.

[31] Alexander Kiossev, ‘The Dark Intimacy: Maps, Identities, Acts of Identifications,’ in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dusan I. Bjelic and Obrad Savic (Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2002), 182-183.

[32] Agnieszka, aged 20.

[33] Alina, aged 24.

[34] Gerlinde Mautner, ‘Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines and Other Printed Media,’ in *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 39.

[35] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 133.

[36] Taras Kuzio, ‘Civic Nationalism and Nation-State: Toward a Dynamic Model of Convergence,’ in *Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe,* ed. Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski and Andrej Marcin Suszycki (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 15.

[37] Jon E. Fox and Peter Vermeersch, ‘Backdoor Nationalism,’ in *Europeana* 2 (A.E.S., 2010), 327.

[38] Adrian Paul Iliescu, ‘Two Kinds of Identitary Concern,’ in *Weighting Difference: Romanian Identity in the Wider European Context*, ed. Vasile Boari and Sergiu Gherghina (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 96-99.

[39] In Georgian: რაც კარგები ვართ, ქართველები ვართ (rac kargebi vart, qartvelebi vart).

[40] Krzyzanowski, ‘On the “Europeanisation” of Identity Constructions,’ 103-104.

[41] Ibid, 105.

[42] Andrea, aged 23.

[43] Lucian, aged 20.

[44] *Knowledge and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia* (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2011), accessed January 12, 2012, www.crrccenters.org

[45] Sandro, aged 20.

[46] Anano, aged 19.

[47] Giorgi, aged 18.

[48] Guido Schwellnus, ‘The Adoption of Nondiscrimination and Minority Protection Rules in Romania, Hungary, and Poland,’ in *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 52.

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[49] The term was introduced by a famous anthropologist C. Levi-Strauss in his book ‘The Savage Mind’ (1962).

[50] From a focus group discussion with the BA students of Political Science at Bucharest University.

[51] Roland Robertson, ‘Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,’ in *Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates*, ed. George Ritzer and Zeynep Atalay (Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 342.

[52] Ivaylo Ditchev, ‘The Eros of Identity,’ in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dusan I. Bjelic and Obrad Savic (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 247.

[53] Maria, aged 21.

[54] Luka, aged 21.

[55] Paul, aged 20.

[56] Elena, aged 19.

[57] It is believed that ‘privileged forms of national identity have been those assumed to be linked with... a “folk” culture’ (Edensor, 2002, 141).

[58] Douglas W. Blum, *National Identity and Globalization: Youth, State, and Society in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27.

[59] Giorgi, aged 18.

[60] Vlad, aged 23.

[61] From a focus group discussion with the BA students of Political Science at Bucharest University.

[62] From a focus group discussion with the MA students of Humanities at Jagiellonian University, Krakow.

[63] ‘Yes’ in Romanian.

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