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## Representing Euroanxieties

### An Introduction

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Although the metaphorical iron curtain has melted and societies on both sides of the old continent have become less exotic for each other, our 'New Europe' is still not the comfortable 'common home' enthusiastic politicians envisioned a decade ago. The cold material of the iron has been replaced by softer ones – 'velvet' or 'lace' curtains, which nevertheless continue to separate the East from the West and frame the opposing sides like a proscenium. By looking and speaking through the lace drapery, however, people on both sides gradually become more familiar to each other. As European history is returning onto a united track, the discourse of democratization and economic developmentalism replaces the romantic ideas about the mythical, fundamentally different 'Other'. Nevertheless, this new discourse is still dominated by the West, therefore it is necessary to balance out the unequal ability to speak

from the different positions in Europe. Thus, in its English language publications, *Replika* has endeavored to foreground the perspectives of the 'Second World'.

The 1996 special issue of *Replika*, titled *Colonization or Partnership? Eastern Europe and Western Social Sciences*, was published with the aim of addressing themes that are considered more sensitive by the people in the Eastern side of the lace curtain. The volume investigates the institutional reproduction of the East-West division in academic and political discourses. The essays included in the volume were written by East-Central European and American scholars, and all address the same set of questions: how has 'western' social scientific research influenced the development of Eastern European social sciences after the political changes; to what extent have 'western' paradigms, research concerns, and theoretical fashions changed the social scientific thinking in the region?; and what are the socio-cultural and intellectual reasons for rejecting their accommodation to local traditions and research agendas? The special issue does not offer a practical blueprint for academic cooperation, but it does call attention to the existence of a regional perspective that has evolved along a historically distinct route.

This perspective has been informed by the mixed narratives and politics of backwardness, belatedness, destitution, and disillusionment that characterize Eastern and Central Europe in mainstream political and academic representations. During the four decades of state socialism, the countries in the region experimented with an alternative modernity that has become ineffective compared to the eternal object of

longing: Western civilization. Since the East has rejoined the West in Europe, however, the particularity of 'Second World' history has gradually dissolved among the many regional histories in the New Europe. This second special issue of *Replika*, titled *Ambiguous Identities in the New Europe*, does not want to establish and cultivate a single marginal or subaltern voice as opposed to the mainstream, but rather to offer challenges to the mainstream from various directions and differing degrees of perceived marginality. This approach entails writing on cultural and political issues that are either neglected or too much taken-for-granted in an Americanized transnational academic world, and foregrounding the East-Central European perspective in a novel way by building on a 'Second World' position from which both the 'First' and the 'Third World' can be insightfully analyzed and understood. The future special issues of *Replika* will be devoted to lifting and drawing aside the remaining curtains – bridging West and East, self and other, colonizer and colonized.

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Since the 'annus mirabilis' of 1989, Europe has experienced dramatic political and cultural transformations, such as the fall of state socialism, the decline of the welfare state and trade unionism, the spread of post-Fordist production, and the emergence of consumer subcultures or debates about the institutional unification of Europe. The processes of reshaping the social and economic institutions and practices are followed – and informed – by various anxieties. In post-socialist Eastern Europe, people are anxious about 'rejoining' Europe, which they consider the 'civilized world' they should rightfully belong to. In post-industrial Western Europe, people are anxious about protecting the achievements of this civilized world as the welfare state collapses in front of their eyes. Of course, both 'Western' and 'Eastern' Europeans share similar concerns about the gradual weakening of the nation-state which, before the outlines of the 'New Europe' started to take shape, had been the convenient and internationally accepted model for institutionalizing political sovereignty and cultural homogeneity. And both 'Eastern' and 'Western' Europeans share worries about the perceived attacks on this cultural homogeneity by the spread of multiculturalism and multifundamentalism.

We, the new Europeans, live in a world that can be called both late-modern and post-modern, depending on how we are affected by the radical economic, political, and social changes that are happening around us. In one moment, we are prudent economic actors, making choices according to calculations we consider rational. In another moment, we are obedient members of the consumer society of the spectacle, enjoying the scopic pleasures that the increasingly flexible media technologies provide for us. In yet another moment, we worry about our unemployed friends or relatives and entertain nostalgic feelings toward the welfare state, which has dissolved in a silent, not-so-velvet revolution. In still another moment, we find that we have more friends living at a geographic distance (yet in an electronic proximity) than in the locality around us that we consider increasingly temporary. In this everyday carnival, we realize that we live in a liminal phase and in a transitional space and inhabit a world in which definitions of identity seem to be painfully necessary and inherently problematic at the same time.

In all regions of the European continent, the recent economic and social changes have led to a new age of uncertainty, or 'risk society', which compels many people to search for new certainties and new identities. Thus, we may decide to participate in cultural revitalization projects, join new religious movements, experiment with new gender roles, or indulge in new consumption practices. These various identity projects, we should realize, take place in a European cultural and institutional context: identities are

constructed vis-à-vis European ideologies and intellectual currents, the inherently European institution of the (post-)welfare state, the European variants of transnational corporations, and the policies and practices of the emerging Eurobureaucracies. In other words, for our individual interpretations and treatments of the emerging Euroanxiety we select from the available identity projects and attempt to define our belonging in European terms.

Identity is the key concept in and for the nineties, primarily because identity politics has become a major form of organizing collective action throughout the world. The popularity of the concept goes along with the culturalization of just about any difference: regional or religious, ethnic or class, national or gendered. The debate between constructivist and essentialist perspectives seems to be outdated by now and there is a fairly widespread agreement that identities are subject positions. As such, they are inherently processual, they are social and historical, not natural or primordial, and because they constantly change, their borders are never fixed or frozen, but are drawn only temporarily and strategically. Identities exist in political and narrative representations, and they may shift as political positions are realigned or narratives are retold. These political and narrative representations always emphasize both similarity and difference, but the terms of defining similarity and/or difference change from case to case. The commensurability of various identities is also a narrative fiction and a strategic construction; nevertheless, there is a universal need among human beings to compare themselves to others or justify their belonging to a certain social group. Identities are projects of becoming and belonging, which are informed and shaped by the already existing political and narrative representations of other identities.

The articles selected for this *Replika* issue all discuss various projects of becoming and belonging in the 'New Europe'. The contributions draw their arguments from empirical research (ethnographic or historical) that is based on fieldwork or discursive analysis. They provide more or less explicit definitions of national, regional, ethnic, religious, or gendered identities, which all reflect a similar perspective: they emphasize ambiguity, flux, and constant change; point out the coeval existence of various alternative subject positions and discuss the strategies of negotiating between them; and stress that identities are constructed by means of political and/or narrative representations. The articles, although to different degrees, all speak to the problems of shaping identities vis-à-vis long-standing or newly emerging European ideologies and institutions. In short, they explore some important examples of the historical and cultural constructions of European identities.

Recognizing that the identities discussed in this volume are ambiguous, temporary, and negotiated also means that the categorization of the selected articles is inevitably contingent and contestable. There are several dimensions along which we might cluster the contributions into coherent groups, but none of them are final and closed to reinterpretation. One dimension is geopolitical: roughly half of the articles deal with East European identities, while the other half discuss pan-European, Western, Northern, or Central European identities. This categorization does not lead us too far, especially because geopolitical differences are in need of deconstruction, and not reinforcement. Another dimension is historical or archaeological: the contributions excavate different layers of historical references. The historical time-span in some of the articles starts well before the World War II; other papers reach back to the modernist, welfare-state period of European history; while another group discusses only recent developments. Since implicitly or explicitly, all of the essays assert the historicity of identity constructions, this kind of categorization is also of limited worth.

Besides the dimensions of space and time, the thematic categorization of identities might also be relevant. Various local, regional, national, and European identities, as well as different ethnic, religious, and gendered minority positions are discussed in the selected articles. What blurs the image is that the analyzed subject positions oscillate between various 'levels', or geographical foci, depending on the strategic importance of the actual political interest, and that the different minority positions may also overlap, resulting in 'multiple marginalities'. Classifying the contributions according to disciplinary affiliations is also a problematic matter, since most of the authors emphasize the interdisciplinarity of their approach. Some of the articles cite statistical figures, others interpret historical narratives; certain papers analyze political action and the choice of identity strategies, others juxtapose various mediatized or literary representations of European identities.

These latter categorizations seem to be more applicable to our choice of articles than the previous ones. Looking through the contributions, we may observe that they investigate two different, though interconnected, aspects of constituting identities: one emphasizes the selection among alternative political strategies, while the other focuses on competing references to historical narratives and representations. The six contributions in the first part of the volume explore the various strategies different political elites, ethnic groups, and minorities deploy in the construction of ethnic, national, and gendered identities. The second group contains five articles that discuss how narrative, political, and visual representations function in the articulations of the different levels of local, regional, and European identities.

The first part of the volume, thus, bears the title 'Political Strategies'. In the first article, *Paul Silverstein* explores how discourses and practices of centralization, integration, and control have produced categories of non-national difference which immigrant and ethnic minorities have appropriated and mobilized to construct alternative narratives of sub- and transnational identities. Focusing on the interaction between the transnational Algerian-Berber cultural movement and the localized Breton and Occitan militant organizations, the author addresses how challenges to the integrity of the French nation-state have been tied to a transnational sphere linking France, Algeria, and the European Union. *George Gavrillis* aims to dispel the monolithic image of an inherent, Orthodox Greek nationalism and civilization. First, he outlines the main events of the Macedonian crisis between 1991-94 and analyzes the diplomatic exchange between Greece and the leading states of the European Community. Then he shows that the process of constructing the Greek state and nation has produced a structured set of cultural and historical symbols that political actors can evoke in different ways according to their own conceptions of national identity.

In the next article, *Róbert Braun* offers a critical reinterpretation of the Habermasian notion of 'constitutional patriotism' by proposing a new constitutionally-based narrative political identity. In his view, the wish to ground post-traditional identity using the concept of constitutional patriotism is based on a misguided attempt to save universal claims of validity. Instead, he introduces the term 'revolutionary constitutionalism', and proposes that the moral justification for one life-form over another should be substituted with the idea of overlapping consensus based on a political conception of justice. *Stefan Wolff* investigates the subsequent formulations of East German political identity through the 'Wende'. After a historical analysis of the major oppositional forms to the late state-socialist system, the author explicates what is often referred to as 'Ostalgie', or the seemingly nostalgic glorification of the former East German society. He suggests that East Germans have insisted on the positive sides of their socialization in a politically different system in order to reconstruct and redefine their particular identity within a united Germany.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, a large proportion of the Russian and Russian-speaking population remained in the newly independent states and found themselves as minorities in a new country. The article by *Christer Daatland* discusses the various political strategies the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia may choose: depending on their social and economic position, their education and family connections, Russian-speakers may opt for Estonian or Russian citizenship, or, as it is the case for the majority of them, decide to wait. In the last contribution to the first section, *Judit Takács* scrutinizes the different ways of defining homosexuality. Taking into account both the self-identification and the attribution aspects of gender-identity construction, the author characterizes the main actors in the contemporary Hungarian homosexual-political field. In her view, the main relevance of analyzing homosexual politics is that its different forms and meanings can direct our attention to the broader social organizing principles of gendered and sexual identity.

The second part of the volume, titled 'Situated Representations', starts with *Marko Živković's* article. The author explores how ethnopsychological stereotypes have been used in the former Yugoslavia and claims that enduring patterns associated with Highlanders and Lowlanders in inter-ethnic characterizations have been accepted as justifications for the war. By showing that in rhetorical practices, any group can be labeled as either a Highlander or a Lowlander, he questions the 'metonymic misrepresentations' of this cultural essentialism. *Ferenc Erős* and *Bea Ehman* report on the research they have conducted among the second generation of post-Holocaust Jews in Hungary. Besides the newly emerging possibility of discussing the Holocaust trauma in historical works and on the political scene, psychotherapeutic discourse also provides Jewish patients with the opportunity to heal their wounds by talking about the painful history of their families. These narrative accounts of personal life histories contribute to a more affirmative and positive construction of 'second-generation' Jewish identity.

*Emily McEwan-Fujita* demonstrates the multiple roles a minority language can play in the federalization and fragmentation of the 'New Europe'. Using the case of Gaelic in Scotland as an example, the author analyzes how people constitute their social identity vis-à-vis a minority language. Then she suggests that the construction of Gaelic-based local, national, and pan-European identities can work both for and against the creation of local, national, state, and European hegemonies. *Kjell Hansen* explores the differences between the local and regional 'levels' of identity construction in Jämtland, a marginal area of inland Sweden. The author argues that on the local level identity is formed through shared everyday practices, whereas on the regional level identity construction is part of an organized political process. Yet while both forms of these identity-building strategies oppose state policies, the local form can be classified as refractory, while the regional one might be more appropriately viewed as an expression of resistance.

In the last article of the volume, European identity constructions are situated in a broader, intercontinental context. By analyzing the representations of male protagonists in films that have won Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor in Hollywood and Golden Palm, Grand Prix, Best Actor Awards in Cannes between 1984 and 1996, *Miklós Hadas* confronts two different models of masculinity. He argues that in spite of the emerging impact of political correctness on Hollywood men in these American productions have basically been constructed, even at the end of the period, according to the modern myth of the 'lonely cowboy'. At the same time, the representations of masculinity in films prized in Europe have incorporated several values, attitudinal, and behavioral patterns traditionally classified as feminine. And now, after making the long road from strategically foregrounding 'Second World' perspectives to situating European identities in a global context, it is time to lift the curtain and open the floor for the contributions themselves.