

Living Relationships with the Past.
Remembering Communism in Romania

by

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ABSTRACT

In the countries of Eastern Europe, the recent history of the communist regimes creates a context rich in various and, many times, contradictory remembering practices. While normative discourses of memory enacted in official forms of memory such as museums, memorials, monuments, or commemorative rituals attempt to castigate the communism in definite terms, remembering practices enacted in everyday life are more ambiguous and more tolerant of various interpretations of the communist past. This study offers a case study of the ways in which people remember communism in everyday life in Romania. While various inquiries into Eastern Europe's and also Romania's official and intentional forms of memorializing communism abound, few works address remembering practices in their entanglements with everyday life.

From a methodological point of view, this study integrates a grounded methodology approach with a rhetorical sensitivity to explore the discourses, objects, events, and practices of remembering communism in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. In doing so, this inquiry attends not only to the aspects of the present that animate the remembering of communism, but also and more specifically to the set of practices by which the remembering process is performed.

The qualitative analysis revealed a number of conceptual categories that clustered around three major themes that describe the entanglements of remembering activities with everyday life. Relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present, and pursuing the communist past constitute the ways in which people in Romania live their relationships with the communist past in a way that reveals the complex interplay

between private and public forms of memory, but also between the political, social, and cultural aspects of the remembering process. These themes also facilitate a holistic understanding of the rhetorical environment of remembering communism in Romania.

*To Alex and Daniel.
To my parents,
Maria and Dan*

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INTRODUCTION

“The most recent history has taken center stage.”
Pierre Nora

In an article published in 2002, the historian Charles Maier¹ contrasted the historical memory of the Holocaust with that of the Soviet atrocities in order to assess the differences in intensity between the two. The memory of the Nazi crimes, he claimed, is hot, while the memory of the Gulag is cold; while the former is enduring, the latter quickly dissipated. To argue his point, he noted the proliferation of museums and memorials dedicated to the Holocaust and the scarcity of public monuments memorializing Soviet atrocities. But is the intensity of remembering accurately measured by the quantity of formal commemorative activities? And if the proliferation of monuments is a sign—of a new historical consciousness,² or of our relationship with the rapid pace of modernity³—isn't the lack of monuments also a sign or a symptom of something? I would like to suggest that the mandatory connection between the “hotness,” of remembering, as Maier put it, and monumentalization practices warrants questioning. One of the queries that prompted this research was, in fact, inextricably tied to this concern: why have intentional sites of memories become the measure, the location, and the privileged sign of remembering in our research? This is one of the questions that put me on the path to searching for memory in everyday life in Romania.

The specific formulation of this question materialized as a result of my engagement with the field of communication studies, more closely with rhetoric, and with the larger interdisciplinary field of memory studies. In the last decade, the ways in which

Eastern Europeans remember their communist past have become a vibrant topic for such diverse disciplines as history, political sciences, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, museum studies, comparative literature, media, film and performance studies. In communication studies, however, the intricate and robust processes of remembering communism in Eastern Europe remain largely neglected. Communication studies, especially rhetoric, have much to offer to the interdisciplinary conversation about the memory of communism in Eastern Europe and at the same time it would also have much to learn from exploring this topic. The lens of communication studies, especially rhetoric, could participate to this conversation by attending the ways remembering depends on public, contingent, and consequential communicative and symbolic processes. As a communication scholar trained in rhetoric and ethnography, I was captivated by the richness and diversity of memory practices related to communism and by the opportunity to think, in this context, about the connections between remembering and everyday life. In other words, I was interested in the ways the remembering of communism occurs in everyday communicative and symbolical interactions.

The purposes of this introductory section are manifold. In describing the context for remembering communism in Romania, I argue that the communist era has long-lasting influences on the ways Romanians relate to their larger past. The manipulation and distortions of history accomplished by the communist regime created a substantial interest or a demand for new, “real” accounts of the past. But while Romanians have a general investment in their whole history, it is the communist past that fascinates and engages them the most. This fascination is the result of a multiplicity of factors, such as the void created by the communist regime in information and knowledge about the recent

past, the heated political struggles over the memory of communism, and the close proximity of the recent past – both from a temporal point of view, but also because most, if not all Romanians, have relationships with many living remembering individuals who participated in this past. I also suggest that Romanians’ fascination and engagement with the recent past are manifested in abundant and frequent activities of remembering that ultimately foreground the past as a presence constantly entangled with everyday activities. Finally, I explain how the everyday as a concept and as a field of exploration supports a more holistic understanding of remembering. In each of these sections, I will also foreshadow some of the theoretical concerns that are relevant to this project.

According to Maier’s assessment, the remembering of communism in Romania is not “hot,” if we only count memorials and museums. To this day, only two permanent locations dedicated to the memorializing of the communist regime are in existence in Romania: the Sighet Memorial Museum and the Romanian Peasant Museum.⁴ And yet, even without a richness of formal commemorative places, in the years following 1989, the memory of communism in Romania has been constantly simmering, and at times it has reached the boiling point.

The Past Under Revision

After the eventful turmoil of the December 1989 revolution overthrowing the communist regime had quieted down, Romanians started facing a host of dilemmas and difficulties concerning not only their future, but also their past. While the revolution formally ended the communist regime, it could not end its lingering legacy, which, over the years, was like a “gift” that kept on giving. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, looking back on the almost five decades of communism, Romanians found

themselves staring into a void. What I mean by this is that the history of the communist regime remained virtually unknown, as the propaganda machine had worked effectively to hide and distort it beyond recognition. Moreover, because the writing of history under the communist regime had been almost entirely subordinated to the agenda of the totalitarian state, it was believed that the entire Romanian past needed serious review. As a consequence, since the early 90s, recovering the history of communism, as well as revisiting and reconsidering the larger past have become exigencies in the lives of Romanians. “The recuperation of the historical memory, especially of those aspects censored during communism” was an important aspect of the deep post-communist transformations.”⁵

There are at least three interrelated factors that prompted the revision of the entire Romanian past during the post-communist years: distrust in the history written during the communist period; the necessity of re-positioning and redefining the Romanian nation in the new political, economic, social, and cultural circumstances; and the fact that entire portions of the Romanian past had been hidden or distorted by the communist regime. Thus, the ways in which Romanians relate to the entirety of their past, including their struggles to reconsider and revise it, as well as their investments in certain versions of the past are largely influenced and shaped by their relationships with the more recent communist past. On one hand, remembering the communist regime as a manipulator and eraser of history prompts critical revisions of the past. On the other hand, it is safe to assume that the decades of communism during which access to history was controlled by the party-state have produced attachments to particular narratives of the past.

The history promoted by the communists was questioned and rejected almost

instantly after the fall of the regime. The Romanian historian Adrian Cioroianu recounts the following telling episode: In 1989, the Revolution occurred in the middle of the school year, more precisely during winter break. For students and teachers returning to school in a now-free-of-communism Romania, studying from a history book produced by the former dictatorship did not make sense anymore. But because it was impossible to create a new course book overnight, the quickest solution was to reinstate a text from 1943—that is, from before communism.⁶ This episode reveals an ongoing challenge: while Romanians distrusted the communists' version of history, crafting a new account of the past, especially one that fosters agreement, takes time.

The field of history, vital for constructing the cohesion of any nation-state, was all the more crucial for the communist agenda. In telling the story of their own field during communism, Romanian historians share the view that “History was the favorite discipline used by the party to exert symbolic-ideological control.”⁷ After the communists came to power in 1948, they sought to reform the field of history in the same way they sought to reform all the other areas of society. They started by purging the universities and research institutes of historians whose political views diverged from the party line.⁸ They continued by reinterpreting Romanian history “to emphasize the influence of the Slavs on Romanian language and culture, to exaggerate the importance of Romanian-Russian relations, and to downplay the Latin character of the Romanian language.”⁹ During this period of Sovietization, Romanian historiography broke with its own inter-war traditions¹⁰ and obscured almost to distortion the role that national factors, movements, and heroes played in the Romanian past.¹¹ But in the 50s, and especially after the Soviet occupation troops withdrew from the Romanian territories in 1958, “the national factors

in Romanian history gradually returned to center stage.”¹² One of the next most significant moments in the writing of history occurred during Ceaușescu’s presidency, when the theme of nationalism was systematically intensified. In 1974, the Romanian Communist Party issued “the founding document of Romanian ‘national Communism,’” which conveyed a certain vision of the past that became mandatory for the writing and teaching of history.¹³ Thus, history “had been invested with the responsibility of reinterpreting the past in order to legitimize the political order of Ceaușescu’s national communism.”¹⁴ The document advanced a series of ideas, which became “sacred themes”¹⁵ of Romanian history as written, taught, and promoted during the 70s and the 80s:

(1) The ancient roots of the Romanian people; (2) the continuity of the Romanians on the actual territory of the country from ancient times to the present; (3) the unity of the Romanian people throughout its entire history; and (4) Romanians' continuous struggle for independence.¹⁶

These themes were not the invention of the communist party; they existed in the pre-communist Romanian historiography as well, but the communists belabored and imposed them as the standard, exclusive view of history¹⁷ and disseminated them in expert history books and journals, in textbooks, speeches, historical movies, and other cultural productions. This version of history was effective not only because it was widely disseminated and highly controlled, but also because it contained elements of a Romanian “authentic nationalist tradition;” thus, “it seemed like a recuperation, when [it] . . . was actually a *manipulation*.”¹⁸ Commentators believe that these elements feed present-day nationalist discourses and movements, but many of these analysts are careful to note their pre-communist roots;¹⁹ these themes also play an important role in both historians’ and

laypeople's debates over the Romanian nation and national identity.²⁰

Although not all Romanians concern themselves with these precise historical details, they nevertheless have a general sense of the distortion of history accomplished during the communist regime. As a consequence, since the fall of communism, "real" accounts of the past are in high demand. The post-communist period is characterized by "an unprecedented public interest in discovering the past"²¹ and an "over-abundance of history."²² In this context, the past was no longer the privileged domain of the historians; it was a domain shared equally by lay people *and* students of history.²³ Remembering communism as an era in which the past was manipulated, distorted, or literally destroyed—for instance, through the demolitions of historically significant buildings executed throughout Bucharest—has stimulated, over the years, a series of activities related to the preservation of the past, such as the passionate and resounding arguments for the preservation of the past against urbanization projects that proposed demolitions. While my present work does not focus explicitly on the connections between the remembering of the communist past and the larger Romanian past, I do engage them when they become salient for my analysis. The arguments that I advance here are that the twentieth century's was the history most affected by the general distortion and manipulation of history, and that the salience of this recent past brings about particular kinds of relationships with remembering.

The Communist Past Between Void and Abundance

It has been suggested that there were degrees of intensity in the ways the past was politicized during communism: the further back in history an event or period was, the less politicized it became.²⁴ The ideology of the communist party severely slanted the

contemporary period: the inter-war era, the participation in World War II, and especially the communist era. Therefore, in the two decades after the 1989 revolution, Romanians have been especially fascinated with the communist period.

In an article about “exhibiting communism,” a museum curator reminisced about her high-school experience studying history in the mid-90s: “History stopped in 1945, with history teachers desperately confessing that they don’t know what to tell their students about the post-1945 period.”²⁵ While the episode related earlier conveyed the urgency of revising Romania’s larger past, this brief recollection illustrates how acutely the urgency of providing an account of the communist period was felt in the early and mid-90s. For history teachers, not having an account of the communist past to teach to their students was experienced as a daily anxiety. Historical accounts, however, could not be produced overnight.²⁶ Thus, while the field of history took its time, other areas of society attempted to fill the void of information and knowledge about the communist past. Organizations, individuals, and general and specialized journals ventured into the unknown territory of the communist period in an attempt to clarify what happened during the five decades after World War II.

Newly created newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, and publishing houses started to attend to Romanians’ cravings for accounts of the communist past. A plethora of interviews, eyewitness accounts, memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies was published and subsequently made the object of further everyday and media discussions. Several individuals and groups of individuals began the work of discovering the communist past in ways that sometimes rivaled the work of historians. For instance, in 1991, a producer working for the state-run television station, Lucia Hossu-Longin, started

to document significant chapters of Romania's communist history, with a focus on interviewing direct participants. The documentary series, promoted with the tagline, "the history you do not learn in school," aired over 35 episodes, which, according to the official website of Romanian public television, totaled "over 150,000 minutes of documentary images and countless confessions from individuals who suffered through the cruelties of communism or who contributed to the crimes of the regime." Furthermore, the same official website contends that this documentary series "remained in the Romanian people's collective memory" and "is a symbol of the struggle to keep alive the Romanian memory." In 2007, the transcripts of the series were published in a book that has been re-edited almost every year since.

At the same time, "individuals and groups of former dissidents and political prisoners" produced "inquiries about the communist period."²⁷ For instance, the non-governmental association The Civic Academy established an oral history archive with participants in the anti-Communism movement known as "the armed resistance in the mountains." Another example is the Association of the Former Political Prisoner, which established the "Memoria" (Memory), "The magazine of the arrested thought." Since 1990, the monthly journal has continued to publish interviews, memoirs, research, and analyses related to communist repression. In addition, some publishing houses have specialized in materials related to the communist past. Probably the most important and popular among them is Humanitas Publishing House, which initiated in 1998 a highly symbolic book series titled "The Trial of Communism." The description of the series indicated that the books edited under its umbrella together would constitute a surrogate for a Nuremberg-type trial.

In the early 90s, a multiplicity of voices and genres thus tried to uncover the history of the communist past from various angles, while professional historical accounts of this period were scarce or non-existent. Only later, toward the late 90s, this multiplicity of voices was joined by historians,²⁸ as well as by political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and even literary critics. These academic explorations have been widely publicized and frequently debated in the media. In addition, numerous cultural productions and practices started to portray, interrogate, and delve into the communist past. The abundance, the constancy, and the frequency of these engagements with the past make the remembering of communism a routine, almost daily presence in Romanians' lives. If memory is "sometimes retreating, sometimes overflowing," as Le Goff argues,²⁹ the post-communist era is marked by "an inflation of memory, which in Romania's case could itself become a *lieu de mémoire*."³⁰ In this amalgam of voices, perspectives, and practices, the political entanglements of the communist past became one very significant aspect.

The Communist Past Caught in Politics

The need to uncover the communist past became part of Romanian civil society writ large, with journalists, historians, academics, politicians, and laypersons urging the process of de-communization, i.e., the "dismantle[ing of] the heritage of the former communist totalitarian systems."³¹ The aspiration to de-communization in Romania is composed of a series of different but interrelated goals, including: reparative justice, i.e., a system for compensating the victims of the regime and for restituting the private properties confiscated by the communist government; prosecution of individuals suspected of crimes and abuses during the communist regime; lustration legislation, i.e.,

legislation that would temporarily forbid former associates of the regime to hold public office; access to the files of the communist political police (Securitate); and the public condemnation of communism. The accomplishment of these goals was regarded as crucial for the legitimization of post-communist democracy in Romania.³² For many of those pursuing de-communization, investigating the history of communism represented a path toward proving “the criminality of Communism and the suffering of the nation.”³³ In addition, by requiring this series of legal measures, the de-communization devotees sought to encode the lessons of the communist past and the remembrance of its injustices into the binding norms of the present.³⁴

The drastic opposition of influential political actors to de-communization radicalized the anti-communist discourse that circulated in civil society, a discourse that “described the whole era as a criminal era.”³⁵ The new political power installed in 1990 was composed of “second-and third-rank” former Communist Party members³⁶ and promoted a “politics of amnesia”³⁷ by which it hindered the efforts of de-communization. One of the main strategies was to obstruct or slow down the passing of the laws, with intense debates accompanying every step of the process. For instance, while the idea of a lustration law has been under public debate since 1990, it was not until 2005 that such a law was drafted,³⁸ and it took until 2012 to be passed by the Romanian Parliament. Another example is the law granting access to Securitate files: while it became effective in 1999, the process of physically transferring the files from the Romanian Information Service to the institution specially created to administer them took over seven years.³⁹ In addition, while trials followed by condemnations of those proven guilty of the violent repression of the Romanian population during the 1989 revolution took place, very few

prosecutions that addressed the crimes and abuses of individuals during the communist regime were initiated.⁴⁰

But the case that perhaps best illustrates the political battle over the communist past is the condemnation of the communist regime by President Traian Băsescu in the Romanian Parliament. The condemnation represented a particularly hot moment in the process of remembering communism. While it was appreciated for its symbolic value—as “the first clear and public condemnation of communism by a Romanian head of state”⁴¹ – it was met with vehement rants and critiques. On December 18, 2006, in front of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament, President Băsescu read the conclusions of the final report completed by the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. In his address the President stated, “I explicitly and categorically condemn the communist system in Romania.” It had been hoped that the conclusions of the Presidential Commission, as well as the ceremonial condemnation of communism in the Parliament would constitute a “historical catharsis”⁴² that would relieve Romanians of their painful past or a “redressive ritual” that would resolve the tensions between former communists and anti-communists.⁴³ It had also been hoped that the report would provide a much-needed “unitary and coherent version of the past”⁴⁴ that Romanians could share. Instead of leading to catharsis and fostering agreement, the report and the President’s gesture of condemnation have stimulated further heated debates. Romanian parliamentary members booed Băsescu during his speech, discrediting the event by framing it as a pure political staging meant to boost approval ratings for the President. Similarly, the report was regarded as a political instrument and criticized for being a normative rather than an objective historical account.⁴⁵ Such

debates over the condemnation of communism are representative of how the political realm transformed the past into “a field where various actors competed for supremacy.”⁴⁶ Caught in the middle of these antagonistic positions, memory itself could be seen as “a prisoner of political reductionism and functionalism.”⁴⁷

However, while these political struggles over memory are extremely significant, they do not tell the whole story of remembering communism. They say a great deal about the largely dogmatic communist/anti-communist dichotomy,⁴⁸ but they say very little about “the multiple realities, memories, and meanings attached to communism.”⁴⁹

Recent History, Live(d) Memory

In an article published in the online magazine Eurozine, Pierre Nora notes a “profound change” that affects historians: “the most recent history has taken center stage.”⁵⁰ In Romania’s case, “recent history” is an expression used to name the history of the twentieth century, especially the history of the communist past for which, as I have argued above, there is a heightened and continuous interest. This interest is stimulated not only by the closeness in time of this era, but also by the relative void in information, or, perhaps, by the lack of a coherent account explaining what had “really” happened during the five decades of communist dictatorship. In searching for such an account, Romanians engage in a variety of practices of remembering that keep the awareness of the past alive in the present.

These practices gain momentum because the past is not quite past yet. It lives through the bodies of those who participated in it and who share, or at least invoke memories of the communist past. Romania’s recent history is thus not really “a past,” but, as Nora contends, a “present that is being written by and beneath the gaze of those

involved in it: the living, witnesses, or victims.”⁵¹ But it is not only the victims who witnessed communism in Romania who keep the past present and alive; there are also the former associates of the regime who entered political life and public life more generally and there are also the “ordinary” people who had lived through the communist period, bringing their own memories of and investments in the immediate past with them into the present.

After 1989, the Romanian public life was to a large degree occupied by the victims of the communist regime. The first public stories of the Romanian communist past were offered through oral histories, eyewitness accounts, memoirs and diaries of the living witnesses – former political prisoners, dissidents, and participants in the anti-communist resistance, as well as associates of the regime such as former secret police officers and party members. The live, wounded bodies of the former political prisoners were at the forefront of the rhetoric of de-communization, arguing in official meetings or in front of the television cameras for retroactive justice. In addition, these former political prisoners were also energetically engaged members of political parties in the early 90s.⁵² For instance, the initiator of the law that gave the public access to the secret police files was a survivor of the communist prisons and labor camps; several other supporters of the de-communization goals also capitalized on their past as opponents and victims of the communist regime in order to gain traction for their cause. The former dissidents of the regime interjected their voices and bodies in the post-communist public space in various capacities. Some of them dedicated their activity to the construction of civil society – like those who formed the Group for Social Dialogue as early as January 1990. Others became television moderators or directors of publications, like the poet Mihai Dinescu,

who was under house arrest in December 1989. While these individuals' reputations and degrees of prominence have changed over the years, they continue to be present and active in various spheres of public life.

Alongside the opponents and victims of communism, former associates of the communist regime also occupied a significant portion of the Romanian public space. Ion Iliescu, the first post-communist Romanian President was a high-ranking member of the Communist Party; he led the country from 1990 to 1996, and then for four more years beginning in 2000. Other former members of the Communist Party joined various political parties and made careers in significant administrative and political positions.⁵³ Other ex-cadres "have entered the private sector as employers," significantly influencing the new Romanian capitalist economy.⁵⁴

But in addition to the anti-communists and former communists, there are millions of others who, like these more publicly engaged individuals, are seen – and see themselves – as both repositories of memories about and reminders of the communist past. There are people who have lived through communism and can remember it themselves, and there are family members, friends, or acquaintances who also have recollections, stories, questions, and investments in the communist past, as a time lived by them. Thus, "recent history" is not only about proximity or contiguity of historical time; it is also about the proximity of and intimacy with living remembering individuals. People share the post-communist present with individuals who participated in recent history, thus making the field of the communist past a collective, shared concern. All of these living remembering individuals carry and communicate the energy of their remembering and their investment in the past in a variety of remembering practices that,

without necessarily being conspicuously public, are deeply entangled with more public practices.

“The salience of the past declines,” writes Schudson⁵⁵ in regards to the effect of the passing of time on remembering. In Romania, however, the communist past has not yet reached the moment of its decline, though there is certainly anxiety about its inexorable fading because “the witnesses, participants, survivors and victims of communist repression age or die.”⁵⁶ This anxiety links one aspect of the dynamics of remembering – the progressive fading of the past – to the biological existence of participants in history. Halbwachs, for instance, believes that there is a “richness of experience” that sustains remembering in the presence of participants in some original events and that memory is eroded as these participants die off.⁵⁷ Subsequently,

When a memory has become a matter only for disparate individuals immersed in new social settings where the events have no relevance and seem foreign [‘extérieurs’], then the only way to save such memories is to fix them in writing and in a sustained narrative.⁵⁸

In a similar manner, Jan Assmann believes that the remembering process has two stages: communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory “comprises memories about the recent past,” that is, those memories shared by the individual “with his contemporaries.”⁵⁹ The cultural memory is “remembered history” as fixed by official or “institutional mnemotechnics” such as textbooks or monuments.⁶⁰ “That which continues to be living memory today,” writes Assmann, “may be only transmitted via media tomorrow.”⁶¹

To some extent, both Halbwachs’ and Assmann’s accounts imply that mediating practices of remembering (such as writing or the building of monuments) intervene only

after living remembering individuals have died. Living remembering individuals, however, are themselves mediators of memory, especially for younger generations that did not directly participate in the history of the past but are connected to it through their relationships with others. In addition, as the remembering environment of the communist past in Romania shows, the writing and the monumentalization (to name only two practices of mediation) of recent history has already begun and is thus simultaneous with—not successive to—the activities of living remembering individuals. This simultaneity makes the remembering environment of the communist past even richer and more intense. In addition, because “communicative memory” arises from daily interactions,⁶² the remembering of communism unfolds as a process entangled in everyday activities.

In the previous sections I offered a cursory description of the context of remembering communism in Romania at the same time arguing that remembering communism is entangled with, and salient in, everyday life. Before introducing the details of my project in Romania, I will first take a theoretical detour to indicate how the everyday, as a concept and as a field for investigating memory practices, can facilitate the understanding of remembering.

Remembering in Everyday Life

As I discussed earlier, remembering communism appears as a field in which memory acts are enmeshed in various ways with everyday movements. The present work explores the remembering of communism in its entanglements with the everyday, investigating the ways in which remembering communism emerges from, and is integral to and contingent on, everyday activities. As a consequence, I background the self-

conscious memory products prevalent as foci in collective memory studies and especially in rhetorical scholarship on public memory and join scholars who argue that a more holistic approach to remembering is facilitated by attention to the everyday.

Edward Casey, for instance, argues that scholars should pay attention to remembering's "operation in daily life and in natural contexts," because the realm of memory is "neither mythical nor mechanical but at one with our ongoing existence in experience."⁶³ In a similar way, Alon Confino calls for locating memory "not only in monuments and museums, but also in the ways people make it part of how and why they act in the world."⁶⁴ And although the domain of our experience, the everyday, is theorized in contrasting ways, authors seem to agree that the concept of the everyday has the potential to emphasize the relational and amalgamated character of remembering. Michael Sheringham thinks that Michel de Certeau's everyday can revitalize the understanding of remembering as a "relational, affective, and performative" process;⁶⁵ and Joe Moran argues that "by emphasizing conflict and change," Henri Lefebvre's everyday is instrumental in rethinking the complex relationships between history, memory, and the everyday itself.⁶⁶

In rhetorical scholarship there is a more general and rather significant turn toward everyday discourses and practices,⁶⁷ but, with very few exceptions,⁶⁸ inquiries into public memory continue to attend primarily to "specialized acts and objects devoted to memory."⁶⁹ More recently, however, a growing body of scholarship has focused on intentional places of memory in ways that address their entanglements with larger discourses and practices, thus promoting a more comprehensive perspective on remembering.⁷⁰ My work adds to this body of scholarship and further challenges the

notion that remembering is a process occurring exclusively in memorial genres.⁷¹ In my work on the remembering of communism in Romania, the everyday is assumed to facilitate a more global understanding of remembering: instead of being enticed by obviously marked memory “texts,” the everyday presses us to attend to a multiplicity of discourses, objects, events, and practices.⁷² “Everyday life,” writes Lefebvre, “is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground”.⁷³ As such, everyday life is the field of connections, mutual influences, and collisions between individual and collective, private and public, official and non-official, self-conscious and non-intentional remembering, and the ground where political, historical, social, and cultural remembering intertwine.

It is in the everyday that memory is narrated, shared, and enacted – in the everyday of our relations with fellow beings, with the larger environment that we inhabit and to which we belong, and with the (“small”) objects that are meaningful for us in our daily dealings. The everyday would thus constitute the level “where concrete exchanges operate between the living memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which we belong.”⁷⁴ In addition, because of “its complicated relationship to the distinction between private and public,”⁷⁵ everyday life invites us to probe the connections, fluidities, articulations, and disjunctions between these spheres.

The everyday is composed of fleeting encounters, unexpected events, and chance experiences, thus revealing remembering as “an unpredictable adventure”⁷⁶ that comprises both intentional participation in remembering practices, as well as involuntary, but also capricious, spontaneous occurrences. These nuances can only be caught in the

contingency of the everyday. Both the contingency and the unpredictability of the everyday prevent remembering from acquiring some reassuring stability or “fixity,” thus challenging notions of public, official and intentional memorial products, at least when they are understood as stable or “fixed.” If, as Vivian argues, “even the most hegemonic public memories are engendered by the nomadic and perpetually unfinished memory work of various groups and individuals,”⁷⁷ then it might be more useful to focus on the practices of individuals as they attend to, and engage in, memory work. And yet, this “unfinished memory work” also winks at, plays on, and interferes with the more enduring meanings embedded in the culture in which it is accomplished. The everyday enables us to catch a glimpse of a “live model [of memory] that is dependent on motion, interaction, and alteration.”⁷⁸ It is (t)here, in the everyday that we can best attend to *remembering*, that is, to memory as a process, and to its unstable,⁷⁹ fragmented,⁸⁰ and interactional⁸¹ character. More importantly, by investigating remembering in the field of the everyday, I hope to attend to the ways in which “memory can be useful in articulating the connections between the cultural, the social, and the political, between representation and social experience.”⁸²

In the context of Eastern Europe, however, the remembrance of communism in everyday life has been recently theorized as standing against the engulfing capitalist culture and economy. The “memory of communism,” writes Rabikowska, “can salvage the types of practices, social structure and subjectivity which tend to disappear under or become absorbed by globalizing capitalism.”⁸³ Similarly, Kovacevic argues that the traces of communism

Recall a dream, . . . they introduce a memory, . . . a sense of heterotemporality . . . of a different way of being, of a space not yet swamped with multinational corporations buying off the country, a populace not yet widely impoverished and a time before commodity consumption becomes a pastime for the selected few.⁸⁴

These theorizations celebrate and emphasize the resistant potential of everyday practices, attempting to construct them as efforts that contest the homogenizing energy of global capitalism.

While exploring the remembering of communism in Romania, I proceed on the field of the everyday fully cognizant of the concept's "fuzzy, ambiguous meanings,"⁸⁵ as well as of its ideological polarities, which entice us to read it either as the domain of power and control or as the realm where individuals can resist social structures.⁸⁶ While during my research I cautiously approached the ambiguities and polarities of the everyday as a conceptual resource, I primarily engaged the field of the everyday as a way of practicing a focus different from the one largely prevalent in collective and public memory studies. Instead of approaching remembering from the level of conspicuous productions that announce themselves as "memorial" or "memorializing," I attempted to approach remembering from the level of the street and the "ordinary" people. It is from this micro-level of practices and spaces that I draw connections with larger and more visible remembering practices.

Living relationships with the past

I entered the field of remembering communism in the everyday as both a rhetorical scholar and as an ethnographer.⁸⁷ As a consequence, the structure of this work,

its methodology, its emergent conceptualizations and its theoretical discussions are inflected and informed by both of these orientations to research.

In the next chapter, “Methodology,” I detail my methodological approach. When I started this research, my broader question was: How do Romanian people remember communism in their everyday lives? Because I wanted to attend to the level of the everyday and of everyday people, I used qualitative research; in order to be able to attend to “‘live’ rhetorics”⁸⁸ and to the interrelatedness and contingencies of discourses, events, practices, and objects, “body-to-body engagement in the field”⁸⁹ was required. More precisely, I employed a grounded theory approach as a flexible yet systematic methodology that grounds novel conceptual understandings in the empirical data.⁹⁰ The section on methodology will explain in detail the elements of my research process, addressing the collection of data, the coding, the constant comparative method, and the emergence of conceptual categories and sub-categories. In other words, I describe my journey in the field, and from the field to the insights that I present in this work. During my analytical process, the categories identified were clustered into three significant themes: “Relating the present to the past,” “Sustaining the past in the present,” and “Pursuing the past.” I organized my three analytical chapters around these three themes, which ultimately represent ways in which people in Romania live with their past. Each of these themes circumscribes a variety of activities by which they engage, in different manners, discourses, events, objects, and practices concerning the communist past.

Relating the present to the past explains how specific kinds of relationships between the present and the past are created and how the past accounts (for) the present. The fact that the present is related to the past – because the present provides a lens for the

past, or because the present enrolls the past for accomplishing specific agendas – is not a novelty. However, “relating the present to the past” refers to the concrete rhetorical patterns that contribute to and construct certain aspects of the lived present – social, cultural, and political—as echoes or reminiscences of the past. “Relating the present to the past,” reveals the syntax of relationships by which people in the culture make sense of the present – and at the same time of the past – by drawing connections between their current experiences and their remembrance of communism.

Sustaining the past in the present attends to practices, objects, and events that prolong the existence of the past into present. It attends to the ways – both intentional and non-intentional—by which the “life” of the communist past is supported in the present. For the most part, sustaining the past is regarded as an intentional—and morally required – activity aimed at preserving the historical memory of a community in order to ensure a sense of identity and continuity. From my work, “sustaining the past in the present” emerged as an accumulated effect of practices, objects, events, and discourses that have different degrees of intentionality.

Finally, *pursuing the past* recognizes remembering as a quest. It emphasizes memory practices that actively search for the past. While the pursuit of the past is mostly the professional responsibility of historians or archeologists, my theme identifies a more generalized attitude toward the past for which the historians is but one of the representative figures. Moreover, the pursuit of the past is not expressed only in the search for history, but also by consumerism and spectatorship. Consumption of foods evoking communism and attendance to cultural productions recalling communism are,

along with the quest for the history of communism, different facets of “pursuing the past.”

The three analytical chapters proceed in a similar manner. First, I review the literature directly relevant to the theme, thus highlighting the conceptual issues and questions that the specific theme engages. It is hoped that the themes themselves, as well as the ways in which they converse with larger concerns in the field of memory studies will contribute to novel understandings of remembering. Second, I describe the theme and the categories subsumed under it. Finally, I provide rich illustrations of each theme, accompanied by ethnographic vignettes and ample interview excerpts. These illustrations occasion more in-depth and concrete discussions of each theme. The methodological chapter also provides a description of this chapter-structure, as well as a justification of the writing choices.

The last two chapters, “Discussion and conclusions” and “Implications for the field of rhetoric,” are meant to review and synthesize the conceptual contributions as well as the issues raised in the analytical chapters. “Implications for the field of rhetoric” more specifically addresses the methodological and conceptual implications of taking a qualitative approach for rhetorical theory and criticism.

Notes

¹ Charles S. Maier, "Hot Memory ... Cold Memory: On the Political Half-Life of Fascist and Communist Memory," *Transit: Europäische Revue* no. 22 (2002). Online: http://archiv.iwm.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=316&Itemid=481, accessed 5 March 2014

² Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory*, ed. Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

³ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁴ See Simina Bădică, "The Black Hole Paradigm. Exhibiting Communism in Post-Communist Romania," *History of communism in Europe* 1(2010); Gabriela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci Cristea, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," in *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums*, ed. Oksana Sarkisova and Peter Apor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008).

⁵ Constantin Iordachi, "'Entangled Histories: Re-Thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective,'" *Regio-Minorities, Politics, Society-English Edition*, no. 1 (2004): 113.

⁶ Adrian Cioroianu, "Les Avatars D'une «Nation Ex-Communiste»-Un Regard Sur L'historiographie Roumaine Récente" (paper presented at the Nation and national ideology: past, present and prospects: proceedings of the international symposium held at the New Europe College, Bucharest, April 6-7, 2001, Bucharest, 2002), 355.

⁷ Irina Culic, "Re-Writing the History of Romania after the Fall of Communism," *History Compass* 3, no. 1 (2005): 5. See also Irina Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania* (National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2003); Iordachi, "'Entangled Histories: Re-Thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective.'"

⁸ Cristina and Dragoș Petrescu Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi Sorin Antohi, Péter Apor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 314; Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. James Christian Brown (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997), 71.

⁹ Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 314.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Boia offers very specific examples of these distortions. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 71-73.

¹² Boia offers a detailed description of this period. He argues that in this period, "Romanian communism had abandoned 'internationalism,' which was in fact disguise for anti-nationalism, and had opted for nationalism." Ibid., 73-76. The period of late 50s and the 60s is considered a period of ideological relaxation and relative openness toward the Western culture. The field of history, however, is thought to "have benefited less" from this relaxation. See Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 315-16.

¹³ "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 316.

¹⁴ Culic, "Re-Writing the History of Romania after the Fall of Communism," 5. Livezeanu also argues, "Nationalism had been the identifying trait of Romanian communism since the mid-1960s, and historians were favored by Ceaușescu as necessary accomplices to his project." Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania*, 1.

¹⁵ Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 316.

¹⁶ Ibid., 317.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 77. See also Livezeanu, who argues, "Contemporary nationalist historiography is thus strengthened by a duality of sources: pre-communist and communist nationalisms." Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania*, 2.

¹⁹ Verdery, for instance, offers a nuanced account of nationalist sentiment in Romania, in which she explains the role played by the communist historiography. Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-Socialist Romania," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 2 (1993). See also Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*. Livezeanu also offers some insight into "post-1989 nationalist historical narratives" that are "a remnant of the Ceaușescu era," providing examples from the larger public sphere: Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania*.

²⁰ See Iordachi and Trencsényi, who provide a detailed analysis of how communist historiography influenced the contemporary historical debates and works: Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi, "In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990-2000," *East European Politics & Societies* 17, no. 3 (2003).

²¹ Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 317.

²² Cioroianu, "Les Avatars D'une «Nation Ex-Communiste»-Un Regard Sur L'historiographie Roumaine Récente," 375.

²³ See also Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 320.

²⁴ Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania*, 2.

²⁵ Bădică, "The Black Hole Paradigm. Exhibiting Communism in Post-Communist Romania," 83.

²⁶ Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 318.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For a detailed analysis of the development of historical studies about communism, see *ibid.*

²⁹ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Randall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 54.

³⁰ Cioroianu, "Les Avatars D'une «Nation Ex-Communiste»-Un Regard Sur L'historiographie Roumaine Récente," 375.

³¹ Raluca Grosescu, "The Role of Civil Society in the Romanian Transitional Justice Failure," in *Lustration and Consolidation of Democracy and the Rule of Law in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Vladimira Dvořáková and Anđelko Milardović (Zagreb: Centar za politološka istraživanja, 2007), 10.

³² Lavinia Stan, "The Roof over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 22, no. 2 (2006): 182. See also Langenohl for a more general and detailed account of the role of memory in democratization processes. Andreas Langenohl, "Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

³³ James Mark, "What Remains? Anti-Communism, Forensic Archaeology, and the Retelling of the National Past in Lithuania and Romania," *Past & present* 206, no. 5 (2010): 280.

³⁴ Schudson, for instance, draws attention to laws as carriers of memory. Michael Schudson, "Lives, Laws, and Language: Commemorative Versus Non-Commemorative Forms of Effective Public Memory," *Communication Review (The)* 2, no. 1 (1997).

³⁵ Bădică, "The Black Hole Paradigm. Exhibiting Communism in Post-Communist Romania," 82.

³⁶ Dragoș Petrescu, "Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Post-1989 Romania," in *Lustration and Consolidation of Democracy and the Rule of Law in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Vladimira Dvořáková and Anđelko Milardović (Zagreb: Centar za politološka istraživanja, 2007), 147.

³⁷ According to Tismăneanu, Ion Iliescu was the main promoter of this politics of amnesia during his three presidential mandates (1990 to 1992, 1992 to 1996, and 2000 to 2004). Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Democracy and Memory: Romania Confronts Its Communist Past," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 168.

³⁸ Petrescu, "Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Post-1989 Romania."

³⁹ Monica Ciobanu, "Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 2 (2009); Lavinia Stan, "Spies, Files and Lies: Explaining the Failure of Access to Securitate Files," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 3 (2004).

⁴⁰ Grosescu, "The Role of Civil Society in the Romanian Transitional Justice Failure."

⁴¹ Charles King, "Remembering Romanian Communism," *Slavic Review* (2007): 718.

⁴² Tismăneanu, "Democracy and Memory: Romania Confronts Its Communist Past," 167.

⁴³ Alina Hoge, "Coming to Terms with the Communist Past in Romania: An Analysis of the Political and Media Discourse Concerning the Tismăneanu Report," *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 18.

⁴⁴ Cristian Tileagă, "Communism and the Meaning of Social Memory: Towards a Critical-Interpretive Approach," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 46, no. 4 (2012): 480.

⁴⁵ Hogeia, "Coming to Terms with the Communist Past in Romania: An Analysis of the Political and Media Discourse Concerning the Tismaneanu Report."

⁴⁶ Grosescu, "The Role of Civil Society in the Romanian Transitional Justice Failure," 192.

⁴⁷ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1395.

⁴⁸ Monica Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 2 (2011): 206.

⁴⁹ Tileagă, "Communism and the Meaning of Social Memory: Towards a Critical-Interpretive Approach," 486.

⁵⁰ Pierre Nora, "Recent History and the New Dangers of Politicization," *eurozine*(2011). Available online: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-11-24-nora-en.html>. Accessed January 5, 2014

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Petrescu, "Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Post-1989 Romania," 139.

⁵³ For a detailed and nuanced analysis of how the former communists were "converted" into post-communist political actors, as well as an account of their current influence on political life, see Raluca Grosescu, *Les Communistes Dans L'apres-Communisme. Trajectoires De Conversion Politique De La Nomenklatura Apres 1989* (Paris: Michel Houdiard Editeur, 2012). In addition, Pop-Elecheș has a provocative analysis of "the reasons for the remarkable adaptability and electoral success of Communist successor parties in post-1990 Romania." Grigore Pop-Eleches, "A Party for All Seasons: Electoral Adaptation of Romanian Communist Successor Parties," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41, no. 4 (2008).

⁵⁴ Cătălin Augustin Stoica, "From Good Communists to Even Better Capitalists? Entrepreneurial Pathways in Post-Socialist Romania," *East European politics & societies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 271.

⁵⁵ Michael Schudson, "The Past in the Present Versus the Present in the Past," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi Jeffrey K. Olick, & Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 288.

⁵⁶ Ciobanu argues, "Although the memory of the recent past is still alive, individual and institutional actors concerned with preserving these memories are increasingly pressured by the passage of time to capture the communist past in either material or symbolic and ritualistic acts of remembrance. As the witnesses, participants, survivors and victims of communist repression age or die the need to create 'lieux de

memoire' (places of memory) to keep their stories alive becomes even more urgent." Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 207.

⁵⁷ Ann Rigney, "Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory," *Journal of European Studies* 35, no. 1 (2005): 12.

⁵⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, as cited and translated in *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶³ Edward Casey, *Remembering* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 17-18.

⁶⁴ Alon Confino, "Memory and the History of Mentalities," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 81.

⁶⁵ Michael Sheringham, "Cultural Memory and the Everyday," *Journal of Romance Studies* 3, no. 1 (2003): 56.

⁶⁶ Joe Moran, "History, Memory and the Everyday," *Rethinking history* 8, no. 1 (2004): 66.

⁶⁷ See, among others, Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002); Gerard A. Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric," in *The Rhetorical Emergence of Culture*, ed. Christian Meyer and Felix Girke (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (2011).

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Samuel McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse," *Quarterly journal of speech* 89, no. 2 (2003). Also, Dickinson attends to the entanglements between practices of remembering and the everyday, in Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (1997).

⁶⁹ Nathan Stormer, "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mneseis," *ibid.* 99(2013): 30.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, Carole Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001); Greg Dickinson, Brian L Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum " *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006); Kenneth S Zagacki and Victoria J Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 2 (2009); Roger C. Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places," *Communication Theory* 19, no. 3 (2009); Roger C. Aden, "When Memories and Discourses Collide: The President's House and Places of Public Memory," *Communication Monographs* 79, no. 1 (2012).

⁷¹ See Stormer, "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mneseis." The sociologist Michael Schudson also makes a compelling case for attending to non-commemorative collective memory. Schudson, "Lives, Laws, and Language: Commemorative Versus Non-Commemorative Forms of Effective Public Memory."

⁷² Blair et al. comprehensively name the objects of rhetorical study by this enumeration to which I subscribe. Carole Blair, Dickinson, Greg Ott, Brian L, "Introduction," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Carole Blair Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

⁷³ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore, vol. 1 (London: Verso, 1991 (1958)), 97.

⁷⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 131.

⁷⁵ Rita Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life," *new formations* 39 (1999): 15-16.

⁷⁶ Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Berkshire, GBR: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing, 2003), 111.

⁷⁷ Bradford Vivian, "'A Timeless Now.' Memory and Repetition," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 204.

⁷⁸ Sheringham, "Cultural Memory and the Everyday," 52.

⁷⁹ Jens Brockmeier, "After the Archive: Remapping Memory," *Culture & Psychology* 16, no. 1 (2010): 13.

⁸⁰ Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical studies in mass-communication* 12(1995): 225.

⁸¹ Andrew Hoskins, "7/7 and Connective Memory: Interactional Trajectories of Remembering in Post-Scarcity Culture," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 3 (2011): 252.

⁸² Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," 1388.

⁸³ Marta Rabikowska, "The Memory of the Communist Past - an Alternative Present?," in *The Everyday of Memory. Between Communism and Post-Communism*, ed. Marta Rabikowska (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 3.

⁸⁴ Natasa Kovacevic, *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2008), 20.

⁸⁵ Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life," 15.

⁸⁶ Ben Highmore, "Introduction. Questioning Everyday Life," in *Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

⁸⁷ The linear structure of writing requires me to put one scholarly orientation in front of the other. And while disciplinary norms sometimes require me to speak in one voice or the other, I like to think of my self as being both a rhetorical scholar and an ethnographer at the same time.

⁸⁸ Michael K Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011).

⁸⁹ D. Soyini Madison, *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 137.

⁹⁰ See, for instance, Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2006), 2-3.

METHODOLOGY

*“What we call our data are really our own constructions
of other people’s constructions
of what they and their compatriots are up to....
Winks upon winks upon winks.”*
Clifford Geertz

Introduction

Investigating the everyday discourses, events, practices, and objects of the memory of communism as they co-occur, in their particular contexts, could only be done via deep immersion in the culture that produced them. I had to study these phenomena in their natural settings if I was to understand “the meanings people bring to them.”¹ “Being there”² was a methodological imperative imposed by the research focus, as the phenomena I wanted to explore could not be “understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harbored, and supported it.”³ In the last few years, “being there”⁴ started to be a methodological imperative for rhetorical studies as a way of attending to the everyday or vernacular⁵ and to “‘live’ rhetorics.”⁶ The use of methods from the ethnographic tradition has been called “rhetorical field methods”⁷ and was embraced as a way of expanding the rhetorical field beyond the text for at least two reasons. Commitments to critical approaches urged rhetorical scholars to attend to “communities often excluded from critical analysis (e.g., the mundane, the oppressed, the oppositional),”⁸ while interest in the materiality of rhetoric moved critics toward everyday spaces.⁹ In the area of public memory studies, a growing interest in places of memory requires *in situ* presence, but—with notable exceptions—even as “they bolster their

analysis with observations” of other people on site,¹⁰ they do not explicitly use ethnographic methods.¹¹

In my own work, I used qualitative methods in the tradition of Glaser and Strauss¹² in order to attend to the process of remembering in everyday life and to gain an understanding of the rhetorical practices of remembering as they are embedded in the larger culture. My project is thus hopes to contribute to an already burgeoning discussion about “ethnographic rhetoric.”¹³

Qualitative research, however, names a multiplicity of approaches and each study is as unique as the individual doing the work. Furthermore, in qualitative work, the methods used “are variously textured, toned, and hued.”¹⁴ In my study, I used an emergent design¹⁵; as a primary modality of collecting data I used ethnographic methods; both my data collection and my data analysis were informed by grounded theory methodology as designed by Glaser and Strauss¹⁶ and articulated by Charmaz¹⁷ and Corbin and Strauss.¹⁸

Collecting Data

For data collection, I primarily used ethnographic methods. These methods are particularly fitted to my research goal, as “ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups.”¹⁹ In my research I did not study the everyday, but I used the everyday as the background against which to observe and explore remembering practices. Thus, I understood the everyday as “the inclusive arena in which occasional, incidental, and unusual events *also* take place.”²⁰ But because “everyday life is everywhere,”²¹ I treated my project as a multi-sited ethnography and as an urban ethnography.

During my three-month stay in Bucharest, as well as upon my return, via virtual ethnography, I was interested in tracing the memory of communism through different contexts and experiences, so, as Marcus would say,²² I have followed “the thing” where I thought it was likely to appear. For instance, I went to observe public places that were symbolically charged in relation to the memory of communism such as the University Square, the House of the People, or the House of the Free Press; I spoke with people for whom the everyday is linked to some degree to the remembering of communism, such as researchers at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes, collectors of communist pins, or artists whose work programmatically engages the memory of communism; I have attended to events that engaged the memory of communism such as political protests, movies, and debates; I have subscribed to and observed virtual communities that distribute posts related to the memory of communism.

At the same time, because my project was carried out in the complex site of a capital city, I was able to treat it in terms of urban ethnography. In this context, I have thought of ethnography as *flânerie*, which is a mode of getting to know the city through unplanned and un-organized movement. This way of walking allowed me to respond to the city’s “enticements,” as “the actual everyday, vibrance of street activity,” summoned me “to other places, not previously scheduled.”²³ This is how, for instance, one day when I allowed a secondhand bookshop to lure me in, I happened upon a copy of the French comic book “Pif”. “Pif” was one of the few Western products that the Romanian government allowed on the market during the communist regime. The episode has helped me understand through my own experience how random events may trigger remembering in ways that link personal memory with collectively shared memories. “Pif” was on the

shelves of that bookshop as an artifact recalling the communist period; the hope of being sold relied, in part, upon this common knowledge. But seeing it allowed me to reminisce both in terms of this common knowledge and in personal terms: I remembered how, as a child, I once played in the bathtub with a green plastic frog. The toy came with an issue of “Pif,” to which my brother had a subscription. Thus, my ethnographic fieldwork had two complementary modes of movement throughout the city: one that was organized and commanded by the focus of my research and another that attempted to give in to the serendipitous invitations of the city.

My main objective in the field was to gather rich data so that I could provide a “thick description”²⁴ that lends itself to substantive analysis. The research design followed the fundamentals set forth by Lincoln and Guba regarding emergent design, which meant that I started engaging in data analysis while in the field, so that the decisions about where to go next for collecting data could be made on the basis of the emergent analysis.²⁵ The field methods employed had led to the development of transcripts, field notes, and memos. The main methods for collecting data were interviews and participant observation. I also took photographs and literally collected other materials such as pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, and books – either because they were offered to me or because I purchased them. I encountered many of these materials by chance, but my informants recommended some of the books that I acquired as exemplars of cultural products recalling communism. One of the people I interviewed offered a number of digital pictures he took in Bucharest and Berlin to illustrate a point he made during our conversation. He said that communism was visible in the way people walked on the streets and that the snapshots from Bucharest depicted morose people with

a bent walk, while the shots he took in Berlin portrayed smiling people with a perfect, upright walking posture. An additional way of collecting data was by saving internet-based content such as Facebook postings, web pages, or photos and by bookmarking web addresses. Although I did not code all of these data or explicitly used them in my writing, they nonetheless contributed to my understanding of the culture and of the topic I explored. Glaser famously stated, “All is data.”²⁶ De la Garza similarly posits, “All that exists and occurs in a culture is data.”²⁷ This translated for me into an attempt to expose myself to as many experiences and contexts as possible, given the length of time available, and to consider virtually everything that comes my way as “worthy” of being heeded. I have taken “all is data” as an imperative to discount nothing.

And yet, “all the data” that I accessed or, more precisely, the everyday against which I observed the remembering of communism originated in my everyday as a full participant in the culture, in my everyday as a researcher, and in the everyday of my informants. As a full participant in the culture, everyday meant living with my parents, visiting with my friends and my family, attending to my child, and shopping for the everyday living necessities. Some of these activities contained significant data for my research. For instance, the concept of “the past as taken for granted” was first revealed in naturally occurring conversations with friends and family. Or, while I went shopping, I discovered the poster for a Romanian movie that told a story from communism; I interpreted the poster as an invitation to do participant observation at a movie theatre where this particular movie was shown. In addition, my parents lived in a particular area of the city, which implied that the organization of my movements through the city and my observation of the urban arrangements always had that particular location as a starting

and finishing point. My everyday as a researcher meant that the places that I visited and that determined my movements in the city were, in part, linked to the everyday of my informants, to whom I always deferred in the choice of locations for the interviews. As a consequence, I visited coffee shops, restaurants, and offices, and my encounters with these spaces were subsequently recorded in my written field notes.

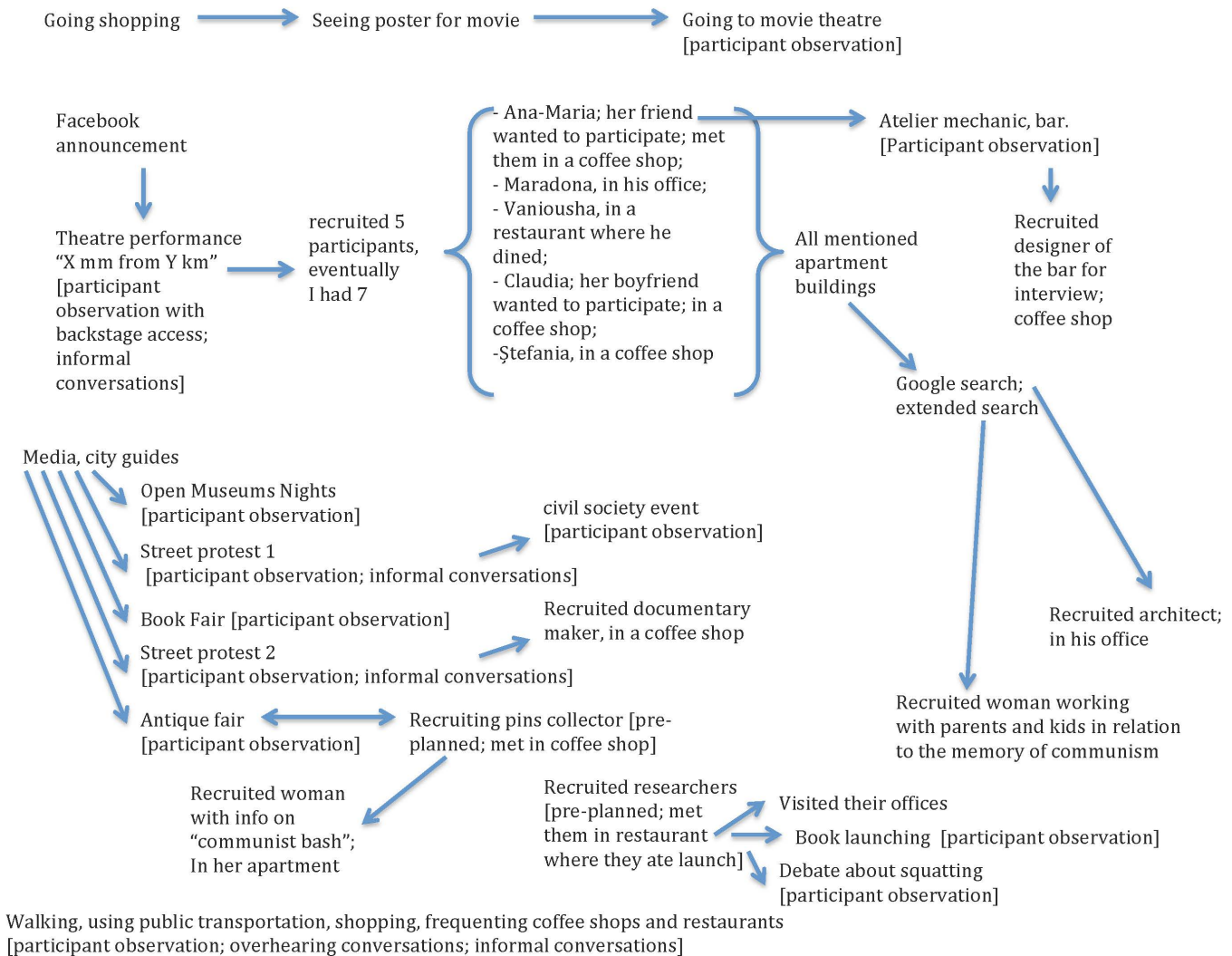
Participant Observation and Interviews

Due to the emergent nature of my research design, choosing settings for participant observation and recruiting the participants for the interviews were interdependent processes (See Figure 1). The focus of my project was remembering communism in everyday life, which meant that there was no obvious, fixed setting where I could find people engaged in doing “remembering communism.” Based on what I already knew about the culture, I had a few ideas of places and people I would like to observe and people I would like to interview. For instance, before leaving for Bucharest, I planned to go to visit areas of the city that were significant in different ways for the memory of communism: the University Square, where the revolution resulting in the overthrowing of communism in Romania had started; the Parliament Palace, formerly known as the House of the People, the most significant edifice of the communist regime; or the House of the Free Press, formally the House of the Spark, which was a significant exemplar of Soviet socialist-realism architecture.

While visiting the University Square, for instance, I was able to observe the scaffolds and hear the intense noise made by the construction workers laboring on the National Theatre located in the area. They were making efforts to rebuild the Theatre the way it was before the communist president Nicolae Ceausescu had ordered its

modification. I was also able to discover a souvenirs shop were pioneer scarves – symbols of the communist organization for youth – were sold next to other symbols of “Romanianness.”

Figure 1: Data collection decisions. Settings for participant observation. Interview locations. Activities performed in the field



These observations and discoveries were certainly significant, and it was also relevant to notice how people passed through and by these locations on their way to their daily business, but I felt I needed something “thicker”²⁸ in terms of data. I started to pay

attention to the media and the city guides, and I connected on Facebook with as many individuals as possible, as a way to stay current with what people in the culture were doing. From the city guides, for instance, I found out about the Open Museums Night and I decided to observe the visitors at the National Museum of History, where, among other exhibits, there was a display of the gifts Nicolae Ceaușescu received from both Romanian people and foreign heads of states. From an announcement posted by one of my acquaintances on Facebook I found out about a theatre performance based on a secret police file. This became one of the settings I was involved with for the longest time, as I witnessed the performance and the after-performance dialogue for three evenings in a row. It also became a setting where I recruited interview participants.

Sampling

Thus, the selection of the settings for participant observation and of my interviewees was a combination of convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling.

Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling is collecting the data that is “most readily available” and is a justifiable strategy in studies that do not focus on “a very specific cultural form, context, or population.”²⁹ Given the question of my project, “convenience sampling” also included something of the serendipity of everyday life in the process of data collection. For instance, attending the theatre performance mentioned above created a fortuitous occasion to do both participant observation and recruitment of participants for interviews.

Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling refers to the use of informants as sources “for locating other persons from whom a type of data can be generated.”³⁰ Lincoln and Guba advise that a snowball sample is “the best way to reach an elusive, hard-to-recruit population.”³¹ In my project, “elusiveness” was less a feature of settings or populations that were difficult to identify or reluctant to speak as it was more a characteristic of the field of everyday “as intractable object” that I chose for circumscribing my research. Consequently, snowballing sampling became a way of structuring my data collection, while I had “the full knowledge that the everyday is always going to exceed the ability to register it.”³² It also became a way to rely on the participants in the culture to guide me toward settings that they considered relevant for the memory of communism and toward people that they considered “culturally competent”³³ to speak on this topic. As an illustration, Ana-Maria, one of the informants I recruited when I attended the theatre performance, recommended that I visit Atelier mecanic (Mechanical Workshop), a bar that she considered significant for the memory of communism in Bucharest. Subsequently, after doing participant observation in the bar, I decided to interview the man who designed Atelier Mecanic, as he was someone who practiced the remembering of communism by creating an everyday space from material remnants of communist factories.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in the later stages of the research process. Lincoln and Guba write that at the beginning of a research project, “any sample unit” (interviewee, setting) is as good as any other, but as “information accumulates and the investigator begins to develop hypotheses about the situation,” the sample is “refined to focus . . . on . . . most relevant” data.³⁴ For instance, when a significant number of my

interviewees mentioned that the communist apartment buildings are reminders of communism, I searched for an interviewee that had the competence to speak on this particular aspect. This is why I recruited an architect who participated in a several-year-long project addressing the communist tower blocks.

Settings and the Role of the Researcher

I started my research by wondering about Bucharest and trying to pay attention to what was going on around me on the streets, in the shops, and in the buses. I also visited with friends and family, attempting to integrate myself into the rhythm of the lives of those around me, starting with my closest relationships. From a spatial point of view, I started in a similar way, visiting first the neighborhood where my parents lived and where I was lodged. My parents' house, which had also been my paternal grandparents' house, was located in one of the more peripheral areas of Bucharest. I then visited the neighborhood where I grew up, also a marginal community, but a more upscale area than my parents' current location.

Next, I went to the downtown districts, especially the University Square and the historical old town center. In visiting these familiar places, I made use of my own personal history to understand how a participant in the culture might experience the city. I took extensive notes to record the ways in which I interacted with the city and the things that reminded me of communism on the streets. But while reviewing my notes, I also wrote memos conveying doubt and skepticism about my way of seeing and the selectivity of my gaze: "Do I notice all these things because I do not live here anymore? Am I more prone to observing and considering these things as significant because of the focus of my research?"

Going about the city and recording my impressions and interactions remained a constant throughout my ethnographic immersion in Romania, but in the beginning of my research, this method assisted me in getting in touch with the ways in which my own personal history and the focus of my research affect my contact with the city and the culture. It also helped me to “feel out the situation,”³⁵ that is, to acquire a general idea about places and people’s activities in them. After this period of adjustment, I started to search more actively for settings in which I could gather richer data.

Settings

The Romanian National Museum of History was one of the first locations I visited. Given that I have chosen to explore memory in the everyday, museums were not necessarily the focus of my research. In addition, I knew that The Museum of National History does not have a permanent exhibit on communism. I made the decision to visit this location during the Open Museums Night, advertised in all the city-guides as “the” cultural event of the weekend. Because admission to the museum was free and because the event was intensely marketed, I knew that I would have the chance to observe a large number of people, many of whom would not go to the museum during its regular hours. In addition, the Museum of National History announced that for that night only there would be on display a “micro-exhibit” titled “The gifts of the Ceaușescu family.” I thought that this exhibit would offer the opportunity for me to observe how people pay attention to communism in the context of their larger past.

I entered the museum, taking the tour of the museum’s exhibits a few times alongside the other visitors, and then focusing on the visitors’ interactions with the Ceaușescu exhibit. I made copious notes about people’s reactions, conversations, and

movements around this exhibit. One of the most interesting insights that I gained from this location was that people stopped by the exhibit because they recognized Ceaușescu's portrait. Until then, I have been somewhat oblivious to the fact that people *had to recognize* some aspect of the communist past in order to understand it as past. The setting of the museum and the clarity of people's movement patterns and their reactions – as they were passing by they recognized Ceaușescu, and then they stopped to look more closely at the exhibit – made this aspect intelligible.

The second setting I chose was the location of the theatre performance “X millimeters from Y kilometers.” Before leaving for Europe, I had read in the Romanian media presentations and reviews of this theatre performance, as well as a few interviews with the theatre director. One of my Romanian friends who knew about my research had told me that I “must see it.” I was already interested in seeing it, because it was based on one of the thousands of files from the Secret Police Files Archive. But the show, based in a different Romanian city, had already toured Bucharest a few weeks before my arrival. So when one of my Facebook friends posted the information that, due to some funding opportunities, the show was to be performed again in Bucharest for three evenings in a row, I quickly jumped at the opportunity. I knew that the friend who posted the Facebook announcement about the theatre show was well-connected to the artistic team and more generally to the Romanian cultural environment, so I asked her to facilitate my entry to the performance and—most importantly—to introduce me to the theatre director.

Through my friend, I gained backstage access, thus being able to observe and even participate in the process of setting up the stage for the event. I was especially excited that the team had announced that a dialogue would follow each performance. I

hoped that these after-performance debates would offer rich data for my research. In addition, the performance took place in one of the spaces of the National Museum for Contemporary Art, located inside the former House of the People, one of the largest edifices built by the communist regime. The performance and the debates proved to be extremely significant for my research. I made three sets of field notes from this event and I also used the opportunity to recruit participants for my interviews. In addition, this event occasioned meetings with former acquaintances from the academic world—with whom I reconnected and subsequently stayed in touch—and numerous informal conversations.

My friend also introduced me to the owner of a small comic book shop located inside the cafeteria of the National Museum for Contemporary Art. I had several rich informal conversations with her and subsequently she became a key informant. In addition to offering her time for an interview, she was very knowledgeable about cultural productions related to communism. She was also one of the persons that mentioned Atelier Mecanic, the “communist bar,” and later facilitated my interview with its designer. When I attended this event, I was at a point in my research where I felt somewhat “stuck,” that is, I was not able to notice anything new. It appeared to me that I had exhausted the information that I could get from simply walking the streets of Bucharest or eavesdropping on people’s conversations. And as relevant as the discoveries at the National Museum of History were, more in-depth information was needed – the kind of information I would only be able to acquire through interviews or, as was the case in this setting, in a place where focused debates on the memory of communism took place.

The next setting that I visited was Atelier Mecanic (The Mechanical Workshop). I selected it as a setting for participant observation because one of the individuals I had met while going to the performance had mentioned this place as a “communist bar.” I took field notes to document the arrangements in the bar, the interaction of the customers with the space, and the reactions of the passersby. While I was in this setting, I also decided to interview the designer of the bar, as I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons why he had made the effort of gathering all the materials from communist factories that he used for the décor of the space. Another setting that I visited was an antique fair. I primarily chose this setting so I could contact and recruit a collector of communist pins, but I took field notes to document the interactions between visitors and the vendors. As in the Museum of National History, many of the people who stopped by the stand where the communist pins were displayed did so because they recognized some of the insignia. I also participated in a few additional events, such as a street fair, a book fair, a movie screening, a book launching, a debate on the Romanian political situation organized by a civil society organization, and two street protests.

I participated in both street protests mainly from conviction—as a Romanian citizen—rather than because of research necessities, but both instances offered occasions for collecting further relevant data and also for meeting acquaintances who subsequently offered support and insight to my research. One protest was organized in support of the management of the Romanian Cultural Institute, as the recently formed government had decided to dismiss them. During this protest I witnessed the public display of the pioneer scarf, as I will detail in Chapter 2. This protest also occasioned my encounter with a group of former co-workers whom I later joined for dinner. To these people, however, I

did not disclose my presence in Romania as researcher. Situations like this one were somewhat ethically ambiguous, because even as I accompanied them as my friends, I was still “on the hunt” for relevant data, and I engaged even these encounters with the mindset of the researcher: intent to remember and write down significant events. The second protest was organized with the hope of bringing about the resignation of the new prime minister, who had been involved in a scandal that had raised questions about his moral integrity. Some of the protesters’ signs were relevant for my research, as was meeting some acquaintances who invited me to participate in a public debate the next day. The public debate, organized by the Group for Social Dialogue, one of the first civil society organizations established after 1989, had the goal of discussing the current political situation in Romania.

My Role as a Researcher

Who was I in each of these settings? What role did I take? What role did the other participants in the setting give to me? In one of the reflexive memos I created while in Bucharest, I wrote, “I can pass as/ I am a member of the group.” This brief note conveys the ambiguous feeling I had about my identity while in the field. Was I a full member of the culture? I liked to think that I was, but I was not. I could certainly pass as one, as I knew enough about the culture—how to behave, what to say, what to make of others’ gestures and words—that people would take my full membership for granted.³⁶ I already had “a level of fluency” enabling me “to converse in most everyday situations without great difficulty.”³⁷ As a native Romanian who has lived through all of her childhood and teenage years and a significant part of her adult life in Romania, going to Bucharest meant returning “home.” Even though I have been living for almost a decade in the

United States, I feel that I am more “literate” in “Romanianness” than I am in the culture of the United States.

Thus, in exploring the remembering of communism in Romania I was exploring my own society as an insider more than as an outsider.³⁸ But during my research, I had a variety of interactions with the culture, in which, ultimately, I was both an insider and an outsider. More significantly, my role and position as a researcher was determined by the nature of each interaction. Qualitative research scholarship usually distinguishes several possible roles that a researcher can embody in the field, depending on the degree of engagement with the culture and on whether or not the researcher discloses his/her identity. Gold, for instance, distinguishes between complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. The complete participant is the role taken by someone who does not disclose his/her role as a researcher; the participant as observer is the role taken when everybody in the setting is aware of the researcher’s presence and goals; the observer as participant is a role common in one-visit interviews, when the researcher does not spend too much time in the setting; and the complete observer does not have any interaction with the setting.³⁹

In terms of disclosure, while being in and observing mundane and public activities, I did not disclose my identity as a researcher. In the daily activities of life in Romania—walking, riding the bus, taking a cab, shopping, ordering a coffee, or buying a book or a bottle of water—I was a complete participant in the culture. In other words, I was acting “naturally” and observing without disclosing my role as a researcher. As a rule, I only disclosed my research activity to the people I recruited for interviews and to the people with whom I had lengthy informal conversations. Because I did not study a

specific population, but a larger phenomenon in the culture, I also took the role of “observer as participant” when, for instance, I interviewed the architect, because my goal was not necessarily linked to an understanding of the architect’s office culture.

Other qualitative scholars use different definition of these researcher-roles, focusing more closely on the membership one acquires in the culture one studies. Adler and Adler, for instance, distinguish the degree of “commitment” to the social world under study on a scale that comprises peripheral, active, and complete membership. “Peripheral membership” describes the position of a researcher who “participates as insider,” but “refrains from engaging in the most central activities”; with an “active membership,” investigators “participate in the core activities” like the other members, but “hold back from committing themselves to the goals and values of members”; and a “complete membership” is a full participation in the culture.⁴⁰

While I participated in many activities as a full member of the culture, I did not hold a regular job in Romania—that is, I did not participate in one of the members’ core activities. On the other hand, I was committed to some of the goals and values of members, as illustrated by my participation in the street protests. I was also invested and interested, like many people in the culture, in remembering communism. In one of my memos linked to the notion of “interest in communism” (see Chapter 3), I wrote: “I am, myself, an exemplar of this interest in communism. Not only because of this particular research, but because, like them, I spent time reading and trying to find out what happened during communism.”

To a certain extent, however, regardless of the degree of my participation and my commitment to the values of the culture, and despite how much I felt or considered

myself a member, as a researcher I remained a relative stranger because I was committed “to the exogenous project of studying or understanding the lives of others – as opposed to the indigenous project of simply living a life in one way or another.”⁴¹

Semi-Structured Interviews

More than merely complements to the participant observations, the interviews offered insight “about events and activities that cannot be observed directly.”⁴² I conducted a total of twelve semi-structured interviews in which a total of sixteen participants were involved.

Recruiting

In general terms, I tried to select informants who would offer “a variety of insights because they have had unique experiences in the scene.”⁴³ I recruited Claudia, a master student in cultural studies because she attended the performance and was also a convenient interviewee as I was seeing her everyday at the local gym I was enrolled in the duration of my stay in Romania. She agreed to the interview and also expressed her boyfriend’s desire to join her and me for the conversation. From the setting of the performance I recruited four additional participants.

As I explained, at the time I attended the performance and the debates organized by the theatre director, I was looking for novel insight. Thus, I recruited individuals who during the after-performance dialogue made interesting points on the remembering of communism – that is, points that were new in relationship to what I had gathered up to that moment from participant observation and informal conversations. I chose Vaniousha because he touched on the relationship between communism and current social “behaviors”; Vaniousha was a man in his early thirties who was involved with a

nongovernmental agency assisting drug users. I recruited Ștefania, a family doctor in her thirties, because she stated that communism is related to individuals' present anxieties. Finally, I recruited Maradona, because he implied that communism is the reason why Romanians were apathetic in relation to civic participation. Maradona, a man in his mid-thirties, was working for a nongovernmental agency addressing issues of governmental transparency, freedom of information, and media ethics. While at the location of the performance, I also met the owner of a small comic book shop, who during one of our informal conversations mentioned a few provoking ideas and stories about the remembering of communism. While we negotiated a day and a time for an interview, she mentioned that her business partner wanted to participate to our discussion.

At some point during the research I realized that while, in many ways, any person on the street would possess some degree of competence to speak about remembering communism in everyday life, I needed to focus, in selecting my interview participants, on those people who offered some sort of evidence that they were actively thinking about or engaging in remembering communism. That is why I decided to interview three researchers with the Institute for the Investigation of Communism's Crimes in Romania. The researchers, all in their mid- to late thirties, were also relevant to the ways in which everyday life—their work routine—is entangled with the communist past. A similar rationale led me to search for individuals who traded communist pins; while visiting an antique fair, I encountered and recruited a collector in his forties. I already knew that such collectors exist from previous experiences in Romania and had somewhat pre-planned to meet and interview one. In his interview, the collector mentioned having sold pins and pioneer scarves for a “private communist party.” He was however unable to give

any details about this event, as he was not a participant. I asked him if he could facilitate contact with the organizers of the party, but he stated that these people were very private and quite careful in keeping these yearly parties “secret.” Thus, when Lucia, one of my acquaintances revealed that one of her office mates participated in such a “communist bash,” I asked her to facilitate contact. Like the collector, she stated that her co-worker would be reluctant to speak to me. But she said that the woman showed her pictures and shared stories, so I asked her instead to participate in an interview. From several informal exchanges I knew that Lucia, in her late forties, was an interesting informant in her own right, because of her own participation in such activities as salvaging communist objects or attending to a pioneer music concert.

As I mentioned before, after a significant number of my interviewees mentioned that the apartment buildings remind them of communism, I searched for someone who could speak competently on the topic. As a result, I recruited an architect in his early forties who had been involved for several years in a project involving the communist blocks. At the suggestion of one of my informants, I also recruited a documentary maker in his early thirties, one of the two authors of *Metrobranding*, a film about former communist brands. The activity of the documentary maker represented a variation of the researchers’ activities. In addition, while searching the Internet for information on events and products relevant to the memory of communism, I found some material on a workshop titled “The Golden Age for Children.” The workshop, run two years earlier by an organization offering visual education programs for children, had invited children and their parents to reminisce/talk about communism with the support of a pop-up book and a visual art exhibit/installation. I contacted by email one of the persons most closely

involved in this action and the woman, in her mid thirties, became one of my interviewees. Finally, upon my return to Arizona, I had a few informal discussions about my experience in Bucharest with a Romanian professor visiting Arizona State University. As his experiences and insights sounded intriguing and new, I decided to conduct a formal interview with him; his wife also participated in our conversation.

In conducting interviews with more than one individual at once, I welcomed the opportunity to allow my informants to “probe for information,” “stimulate one another’s responses, and even pose questions to one another.”⁴⁴ In addition, the interactions between interviewees were informative in regard to the ways in which individuals diverge and converge in remembering communism. I have conducted my interviews in natural field settings, not primarily because I lacked the resources for formal settings, but because I wanted my interviewees to choose a location that was convenient for and familiar to them. In going to the locations of their choice, I welcomed the opportunity to be introduced to their everyday places.

In very general terms, my interview participants had “the relevant experience to shed light” on the topic(s) I wanted to understand.⁴⁵ At the same time, each interview had specific purposes; these purposes were subordinated to the larger goal of including as much information as possible, with as much variation in experiences as possible.⁴⁶

Consent and Confidentiality

My research project has been determined to be exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board. In my application I explained that, “Along very general lines, I am interested in asking participants to clarify for me issues related to their public behavior in public spaces and I will ask them to talk to me about spaces and events in the

city that remind them of communism. The topics I am investigating are not sensitive and I do not anticipate putting my subjects at any risk, because what I am interested in is mainly their public behavior as it relates to the memory of communism.” In line with IRB requirements, I provided each participant with an information letter on which I provided my contact information and on which I explained how the data would be used, and that I would like to tape the interview.

Before the beginning of each interview I made sure, once again, that they agreed and were comfortable with being recorded. I also explained how I will maintain confidentiality and that every effort will be made to preserve their privacy. To accomplish this goal, I asked my interviewees to choose a pseudonym for themselves. The pseudonyms were further used in saving the audio files on my computer, in transcripts, and in presentations. However, a number of my interviewees and informants—such as the designer of the bar, the comic book shopkeeper, the researchers, and the documentary maker—were public persons who granted me the interviews *as public persons*. In other words, they consented to be identified by their own names.

Interview Process

My interviews lasted anywhere between 50 minutes and 120 minutes. The length of the interview depended on the time people had available, but also on their personalities. The majority of them were eager to share information and stories. Some of them had doubts about their competence on the topic and wondered “how useful” they would be to me. In order to put them at ease, I usually reiterated how grateful I am for their time, emphasized that they would be very helpful, and told them that the knowledge that I seek from them comes from the fact that they live in Romania. In these instances, I

realized that perhaps the term “interview” was too technical and I would be better served if, in saying interview, I highlighted the conversational aspect of it. In fact, semi-structured or in-depth interviews are “conversations with a purpose”;⁴⁷ they are “modeled after a conversation between equals rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange.”⁴⁸ This modality of interviewing fits well with the spirit of grounded theory methodology, because both “are open ended, yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet restricted.”⁴⁹

As I mentioned earlier, I entered the field with the broad question “How do people remember communism in everyday life?” During the initial stages of participant observation, however, I strived to understand both the ways in which people in the culture express concerns and views related to my topic and their relevant daily experiences. One of the things that I learned using my own experience was that certain aspects of the city might trigger connections with/reminiscences of the communist period. During my visit to the National Museum of History, I observed that after recognizing Ceaușescu’s portrait, people approached with curiosity the small exhibit on communism. Consequently, I wanted to know if there were other instances and places in which people “recognize” the communist past. In one of my memos dated June 10, 2012, I noted: “As I talk to people and explain my project, I come to specify one of the research questions in terms of ‘what is out there today—in the city, around us—that reminds us of communism’ as opposed to the broad ‘how we remember.’”

In addition, in witnessing the three evenings of debates after the theatre performance of “X mm from Y km,” I learned that people are likely to talk about communism as “a continuity” and “a presence,” rather than treating the communist

period as something of the past. Thus, a question about the construction of the past as present started to be contoured: What are the events, objects, practices that allow people to talk about the past as a presence? Or, more generally, how is the presence of the past constructed? It was these emergent lines of inquiry that further supported the crafting of my questions for the interviews, which I conducted as “loosely guided explorations of topics.”⁵⁰ In line with grounded theory methodology, I first went through the process of learning “about research participants’ concerns and experiences” before developing my interview guides.⁵¹

Interview questions. While I designed a general structure for the interview (initial open-ended questions, direct questions, and ending questions),⁵² and jotted down specific questions for each participant, I never carried these with me, as I wanted to remain unconstrained by a fixed organization and be able to “follow new leads in the interview situation.”⁵³ The interview questions, as Charmaz writes, “must explore the interviewer’s topic and fit the participant’s experience.”⁵⁴ I usually started with questions delving into the participant’s activities – their work or hobbies (when they were relevant to my topic) or the opinions or stories that initially motivated the selection of that particular individual. Some examples of initial open-ended questions from my interviews include:

- Tell me about your work at/with...
- Tell me about your passion for collecting pioneer pins. How did you start?
- Tell me about your daily activities as researchers of communism...
- I found it really interesting that you attended that pioneer concert. Tell me a little bit about the context.

Sometimes, the initial open-ended questions were enough for the conversation to branch out to other topics that the participants wanted to explore. I would follow the leads offered by them with probing and follow-up questions. Examples of probing questions included:

- When you said... what did you mean by that? Can you give me an example of x?
- Why do you go to...?
- Do you intentionally pay attention to these kinds of events? Why? What is appealing about them?
- What makes you say that?
- Where do you see these kinds of...?
- Why do you mention this? Is there a connection with communism?

The emergent research questions that I mentioned above were translated into direct questions by which I would introduce in the interview topics of interest to me.⁵⁵ I generally asked these questions later in the interview, “after the subjects have given their own spontaneous descriptions and indicated which aspects of the phenomena are central to them.”⁵⁶ Initially, I started with this one question:

- Are there things around you that remind you of communism? On the streets? People? Objects?

As during my subsequent interviews my participants touched on other possible paths for remembering, I started to add:

- Are there behaviors that remind you of communism?
- Are there things you do because you remember communism?

- What are some of the occasions when you talk about communism?
- If they mentioned conversations with friends or events that were related to the remembering of communism, I asked them to describe what happened in these situations and how others viewed it.⁵⁷
- The people you encountered/you talked to in this situation, what did they say/do?

Although I started to pursue the question of the past constructed as a presence, I did not want to suggest this interpretation to my informants. Instead, when they mentioned various aspects that reminded them of communism, I asked:

- Why do these things/ aspects remind you of communism?

At the end of the interview I asked the participants if they had something to add or if there was something that they felt they could not introduce into the conversation because of my questions. I also told them to feel free to stay in touch with any questions they might have about the research. And I made sure that I conveyed my gratitude for offering me their time and thoughts.

These questions elicited data about the public aspect of my participants' lives (what participants do in the city, in public events, at work, in offices) and about their "personal lives that bridge their public and private experiences"—that is, their "subjective experience of public events" and "their experience with friends and family."⁵⁸ More precisely, the data obtained in the interviews refer to the connections between people's public activities and remembering, descriptions of how people experience their surrounding public spaces and social environments via remembering, and, more

generally, about how remembering is implicated in their social and professional everyday life.

I took notes during each interview, so I could look back on them and code, as I only fully transcribed the interviews after returning from the field. I also recorded the reactions, thoughts, and questions triggered by these interviews in memos in my personal journal.

Other Contacts in the Field

In addition to the individuals that I recruited for interviews, I made a series of academic contacts from a variety of disciplines: sociology, political science, performance studies, architecture, and history. While I was in the field, they provided useful feedback on my research, as I checked with them the insights that were emerging from my analysis. They were also invaluable resources that oriented me toward and helped me to acquire the Romanian scholarly literature relevant to my project. I made the point of citing this literature as “a very helpful local perspective.”⁵⁹

Analyzing Data in Grounded Theory

Analysis, writes Geertz, “is sorting out the structures of signification.”⁶⁰ In order to sort out these structures of signification, I used an application of the grounded theory method as developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967,⁶¹ and outlined by Charmaz⁶² and Corbin and Strauss.⁶³ As designed by Glaser and Strauss, the grounded theory method is concerned with the generation of fresh insights (novel concepts and theories) from the data. Their goal was to switch the emphasis from verifying theories to “discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area one wishes to research.”⁶⁴ In the last four decades, grounded theory has become “the most commonly used qualitative research

method.”⁶⁵ It is also “the most frequently discussed, debated, and disputed of the research methods.”⁶⁶ Its contested nature, however, does not diminish the value of the grounded theory method, but attests to “its profusion and promise.”⁶⁷ Grounded theory’s commitment to staying intimate with the data and thus to deriving from them conceptual structures that “are closely related to the daily realities (what is actually going on) of substantive areas”⁶⁸ make this method particularly fitted for this research project.

Since its inception in 1967, grounded theory scholars have developed at least three variants of the method: objectivist, postpositivist, and constructivist. Objectivist grounded theory assumes that researchers “are neutral analysts of a knowable external world”; postpositivist approaches to grounded theory “rely on scientific method and aim for scientific credibility but acknowledge that research participants may have varied ways of defining their situation”; and constructivists understand their data analyses “as constructions” that locate data “in time, place, culture, and context,” and that also reflect the individual researcher’s social and epistemological locations.⁶⁹ My epistemological stance is more closely aligned with the constructivist position that Charmaz takes: “we are part of the world we study and the data we collect”; the grounded theories are *constructions* accomplished “through our past and present involvements with people, perspectives, and research practices”; thus, the end result of a grounded theory approach is “an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world.”⁷⁰ In other words, this perspective fully acknowledges and embraces the notion that the researcher is a human instrument⁷¹ and that the research processes take place “*through* [the researcher’s] experience – physically, socioemotionally, rationally, and spiritually.”⁷²

Grounded theory method (GTM)⁷³ is composed of “a set of general principles and heuristic devices”⁷⁴ and is “a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data.”⁷⁵

Grounded theory method asks researchers to enter into an intimate, dynamic, and iterative relationship with their data with the goal of apprehending what we might call, with Geertz, “the conceptual structures that inform our subjects’ acts, the ‘said’ of social discourse.”⁷⁶ In grounded theory, data collection and analysis are simultaneous processes that inform and reorganize each other; codes are generated from the data; comparative methods are used throughout the entire inquiry; the goal is to construct “tentative abstract categories” that explain what is happening in the data; these categories are further integrated into a theoretical framework that articulates the relationships between these categories.⁷⁷

Coding in Grounded Theory

Coding is one of the widely used practices for data analysis in qualitative research. A code is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.”⁷⁸ Codes can be developed, usually on the basis of already extant theoretical concepts, prior to data collection or they can emerge “inductively through the coding process.”⁷⁹ In grounded theory, the coding is “bottom-up”⁸⁰ or data-driven: the researcher develops the codes “through readings of the material,”⁸¹ and the codes are “suggested by the data, not by the literature.”⁸²

Grounded theory adopts different coding strategies that advance the abstraction of ideas from data. Initial or open coding opens up the data to various interpretations; focused coding prioritizes and classifies the analytical ideas that emerged during the

initial stages of the exploration; and axial coding further specifies and integrates the conceptual categories.⁸³ Some scholars describe these as successive coding steps, but Corbin and Strauss argue that open coding and axial coding “go hand in hand” and that the distinction between them is “artificial.”⁸⁴ These processes are not linear and discrete, also because grounded theory asks researchers to engage in constant comparison during all the steps of data collection and analysis, thus ensuring a continuous back and forth between the emergent conceptualizations and the concrete sets of data.⁸⁵

Process of Analysis

Open Coding

As I mentioned above, I started scrutinizing my data while in the field. After a couple of weeks of participant observation, I felt that I needed to take stock of my data and so I printed my field notes and started coding. Open coding “is about attaching initial labels”;⁸⁶ these initial codes are provisional, as they “aim to remain open to other analytic possibilities.”⁸⁷ Some of my initial codes included “implicit memories in conversation,” “seeing the past,” “recognizing the past,” “passing by historical markers.” These preliminary codes further organized my data collection, by suggesting that I need to explore how the communist past appears and is treated in conversations and how the past is observed in people’s movements throughout the city.

Similarly, as I begun to interview participants, I realized that people talk less about the “memory of communism” and more about the “continuity of communism” and the “presence of communism.” I followed up on this theme by focusing in my in-depth interviews on the instances in which people mentioned communism in relation to a present situation, by asking such questions as: Why do you think this is related to

communism? In other words, I was collecting data “to check and fill out” an emergent category, i.e., “the presence of communism.” Further comparison of these instances resulted in a layered and nuanced understanding of the ways in which individuals construct relationships between the present and the past. So this preliminary coding in the field, accompanied by memo writing detailing what aspects stand out and my “ideas about the codes,”⁸⁸ assisted me with further refining and focusing my data collection, and my research questions, and it also started my analytical thinking early in the research process.

After I returned from the field, I fully engaged in data analysis by coding the field notes from the participant observation. I printed my field notes and I chose to code by hand, incident to incident. Charmaz suggests that coding incident to incident is a better way to code data that contain “concrete, behavioristic descriptions of people’s mundane actions.”⁸⁹ As I coded, I asked such questions as: What are people doing? How do people talk about communism? What are they accomplishing by talking about the past in a certain way? What specific language means and/or strategies do they use?⁹⁰ Then I transcribed the codes on cards. On each card I made sure to specify the source of the code, i.e., the specific page on my field notes where the codes were created. Next, I spread the cards on the floor of my living room and started to sort them,⁹¹ that is, to cluster them together according to similarities. I stacked those that felt as if they belonged together, i.e., those that seemed to accomplish the same thing from a rhetorical point of view. For instance, codes such as “advantages of apartment buildings,” “happy not all is lost,” and “wishing back the pioneer scarf” were grouped in the category “Fancying the past in the present.”

Focused Coding

At the end of this process I had about twenty-five tentative categories. Some examples include “comparing the present to the past,” “communism as décor,” using the past to describe the present,” “relationships with the past,” “communism in language,” “communism as décor,” and “communist past as a cause.” After I stacked the codes under these provisional categories, I went through them one more time, to ask if they really belonged under their respective label and sometimes I went back to the original source of the code. In this process, some of the codes were subsumed by other codes, some of them were re-coded, and some of them were dropped.⁹² This was the beginning of a more focused coding process,⁹³ as I was starting to prioritize, classify, and integrate my codes into categories.

I discussed these provisional categories and the emergent analytical ideas in a data meeting with my committee members. The data meeting represented one of the turning points in my research, because during this conversation one of my committee members drew my attention to the fact that the field of collective memory studies is increasingly focused not on memory, but on *remembering* as practice, activity, and process. Although I had already coded for actions and activities, my subsequent coding of the interviews and my overall analysis became even more intent on asking questions and exploring activities related to remembering. I used action codes, which labeled the data in terms of “what is happening and what people are doing.”⁹⁴ Such codes as “seeing a movie,” “being involved,” “functionalizing space,” or “debating with friends,” made visible the actions in my data⁹⁵ and at the same time oriented my analytical thinking toward “ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations.”⁹⁶

Constant Comparison

Next, I started to fully transcribe my interviews. As I finished each transcription, I printed it and read through it once, using this occasion to do pre-coding. That is, I highlighted quotes or passages that struck me as important.⁹⁷ The transcription and the pre-coding stage of the interviews was also accompanied by memo writing, as I wanted to record the general topics of the interviews and jot down ideas about the passages that stood out for me. Then I coded each interview, and started to compare the codes generated with the previous categories and codes. As before, I used cards. I continually compared between the previously selected categories to the new codes; I integrated the new codes in previous categories, I recoded, I renamed categories, I went back to my original interviews to recode pieces of data. At the end of this process I had about 82 provisional categories with their attached codes.

Axial Coding

At this point, I went through all of them to make sure that the codes belonged with the category I had assigned them to⁹⁸ and in the process I also checked the categories themselves. Where they too coarse? Where they too fine?⁹⁹ Could some of them be interpreted as subcategories of other categories? What are the variable qualities that differentiated between the codes inside of each category? Could some of them be regarded as properties or dimensions of other categories? How were these categories related? With these questions, I engaged in axial coding, which relates categories to subcategories and specifies the properties and dimensions of a category.¹⁰⁰ Properties of a category are characteristics or attributes and dimensions locate the property along a continuum or range. To identify properties and dimensions, I went back to the original

data at the exemplars representative of categories and looked for differences among them. I created a codebook, in which I listed my emergent categories, their definitions, their properties, and their dimensions (see Figure 2). I also created a diagram of all categories and subcategories and started to map out the relationships between them. Both these processes were accompanied by memo writing, to keep track of the analytical ideas stimulated by these activities. In the process of reflecting and analyzing the categories, three overarching themes that connected multiple categories also emerged.

Figure 2. Codebook sample

Category	Definition	Properties	Dimensions	Exemplars from the data/data source
Just like [during] communism (<i>in vivo</i>)	- instances in which people state that today things are the way they used to be during communism and/or offer examples	Certitude of comparison	Confident / doubtful	“And this is like during Ceausescu’s time. There is practically a power source, a source of authority that orders something. And on the chain of command, things get done.” (Int V p 5)
		Specificity of comparison terms	General / specific	“today we are exactly in 1947” [year when communists took power in Romania] (Obs 77); “I can compare Nastase era with communism, for instance, because of the media censorship” (Obs p 64)

Themes

Themes are “*outcome[s]* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection,” but they are not something coded.¹⁰¹ Some scholars use theme and category interchangeably.¹⁰² DeSantis and Ugarizza describe themes as having four interrelated attributes: they emerge from the data; they are more general and abstract than categories;

they “are embedded in repetitive or variant, often disparate expressions of social behavior or verbal interaction”; and they “connote the idea of a unified and holistic meaning.”¹⁰³ For me, themes established the relationships between several categories, that is, they captured the common thread or the underlying unifying meaning of several categories (see Figure 3).

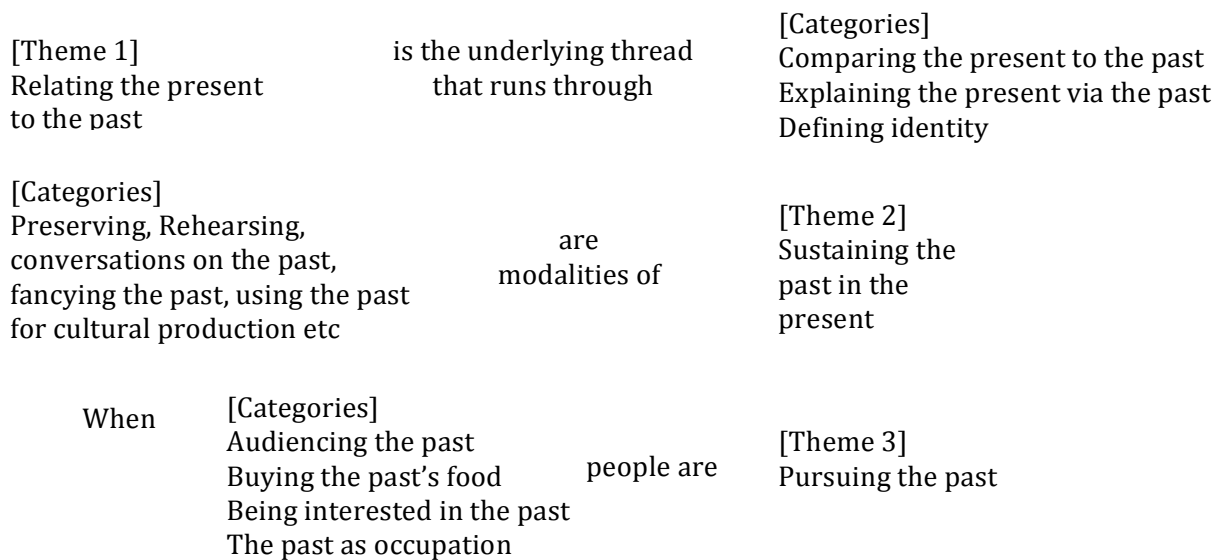
Thus, relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present and pursuing the past have emerged from my research as facets or variations of remembering that highlight various aspects of the activities involved in memory as a social phenomenon. These themes and their concretization in the categories that they link thus anchor the ways in which I describe the process of remembering in my subsequent analytical chapters.

The analytic processes of grounded theory are not, however, mechanical or formulaic.¹⁰⁴ Data can tell different stories to different people and grounded theory allows for an imaginative engagement with the data, because the method is not a “simple application of a string of procedures.”¹⁰⁵ Locke, for instance, argues that grounded theory has an “open-ended creative dimension.”¹⁰⁶ Such notions as “human as instrument” and “theoretical sensitivity” can serve to explain the creative dimension of grounded theory.

Sensitivity

Lincoln and Guba argue that a series of characteristics, such as responsiveness or adaptability, “uniquely qualify the human as instrument of choice in naturalistic inquiry.”¹⁰⁷ In describing these qualities, they were concerned with demonstrating that humans can “approach a level of trustworthiness similar to that of standardized tests.”¹⁰⁸ But recognizing the human as the instrument means to acknowledge, as de la Garza put

Figure 3: Connecting categories through themes



it, “the researcher as a whole person, as the means of collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing data.”¹⁰⁹ It means to have awareness of the interplay between the subjectivity of the researcher and the “experiential, historical, and cultural context” of the research.¹¹⁰ The researcher is an integral part of the grounded theory method and its interpretative outcomes; his/her subjectivity “provides a way of viewing.”¹¹¹

In grounded theory, what the researchers bring with them to the research process has been traditionally discussed through the concept of “theoretical sensitivity.” Glaser and Strauss originally advanced “theoretical sensitivity” as a quality that the researcher needs to possess in order to generate theory from the data. They described it as a “personal and temperamental bent” and an “ability to have theoretical insight into [the] area of research, combined with an ability to make something of his insights.”¹¹² In this

account from 1967, Glaser and Strauss emphasized “theoretical sensitivity” as a skill and underplayed it as a mode of seeing the data, as they were concerned with providing an equivalent for the objectivity required by the dominant positivistic/quantitative paradigm.¹¹³ Sensitivity, however, is both a skill and a way of seeing the research process, the data, and the outcome of the research. More precisely, my training in rhetoric affected the ways in which I conceived of the data. It influenced my coding process, and oriented me toward certain problematics in the field and during my analysis process. My rhetorical training also shaped the ways in which I see the theorizing process. However, it is a particular position in the field of rhetoric that both allows for my adoption of the grounded theory method and inflects a certain view on the method itself.

View on the Grounded Theory Method

A number of rhetorical scholars argue that “method” curtails the critic’s imagination and impedes the humanistic creativity inherent in and required by the act of criticism. Condit, for instance, argues that, “In an academy where theoretically dense methodology is increasingly valorized, not as a techné for accomplishing anything, but as a science in itself, we risk losing criticism as an enterprise altogether.”¹¹⁴ Along similar lines, Dow speaks firmly against attaching the work of the rhetorical critics “to vocabularies of method”¹¹⁵ because “the authority granted by theory or method effaces the authority of the critic.”¹¹⁶ Such proclamations amount to “something akin to an anti-methodological position.”¹¹⁷ However, rhetorical critics are resistant to method only to the extent that method is understood as “the mechanistic, formulaic, scientific application of an apparatus.”¹¹⁸ As I argued throughout my methodological account, grounded theory

method is neither formulaic nor mechanistic and its malleability and openness do not preclude the creativity and inventive capacity of the researcher.

In many ways, the precepts of grounded theory are well aligned with the ways in which some rhetorical critics think about their engagement with the “objects” of their research. Like the authors and the proponents of grounded theory, rhetorical critics are preoccupied with the issue of “applying pre-existing theory to the interpretation of rhetorical transaction.” Black argues that a pre-existent theoretical orientation would “inhibit critics from seeing new things” and calls for an “emic orientation” that would seek “to coax from the critical object its own essential form of disclosure.”¹¹⁹ Black’s influential text prompted the community of rhetorical critics to adopt “a pluralistic stance” that was sought to “generate the requisite conceptual innovation equal to the task of mastering and making intelligible the bewildering variety of objects that constitute rhetoric.”¹²⁰ Similarly to Black, Jasinski distrusts the deductive processes, but is equally dissatisfied with inductive approaches. In promoting “conceptually oriented criticism” he proposes – not unlike grounded theory proponents¹²¹ – a “process of abduction” defined as “a back and forth tacking movement between text and the concept.” While the ultimate goal is not conceptual innovation, concepts are viewed as “works in progress.”¹²²

In addition, like grounded theorists, rhetorical scholars see the deployment of method as “the exercise of a trained sensibility.”¹²³ Ceccarelli, for instance, argues, “rhetorical critics should choose which aspects of a fairly loose rhetorical lexicon to use to best illuminate a specific text, and work to build a pool of findings that are united opportunistically in the person of the sensitive and well-read rhetorician.”¹²⁴ Charmaz, who is a well-known practitioner of grounded theory has a fairly similar view on

theorizing: “In research practice, theorizing means being eclectic, drawing on what works, defining what fits.”¹²⁵ Finally, like grounded theorists working within the constructivist paradigm, rhetorical scholars recognize that their interpretive practice changes the text they engage, transforming it, as Dow argues, into “the production of the experiences we have with it, the language we use to talk about it, and, significantly, the argument we wish to make about it.”¹²⁶ Charmaz also sees the researcher as part of the constructed theories and the theories as reflecting “the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences.”¹²⁷

Viewing grounded theory as a flexible method that is aligned with the rhetorical field’s understanding of the work that critics do allowed me to find a common ground from which to do research by integrating grounded theory and rhetoric.

Data / Textual Fragments

Several qualitative researchers draw attention to the problems raised by using the term “data.” Bryant and Charmaz argue that “data” evokes the imagery of the computer technology field, suggesting that “human beings and computers ‘process’ information from data, in much the same manner as petrol is refined from crude oil.”¹²⁸ Van Manen also contends that “data” is “ambiguous” and “misleading” within human sciences, because of the term’s “quantitative overtones associated with behavioral and more positivistic social science.”¹²⁹ And Locke, cautioning against considering data as “the direct representations of the lives and worlds of those studied,” re-defines data as “the lives and worlds in which we engage and shape and textually materialize as field notes, transcripts, visual and documentary evidence etc.”¹³⁰

My rhetorical sensitivity oriented me toward seeing data as text or, more exactly as a compilation of fragments of text. Because of the nature of everyday life – fragmentary and contingent – my data are not finished texts, but rather fragments. They are fragments because the “everyday practice is dispersed, fragmented”¹³¹ and also, more importantly, because in the everyday “nothing is ever completely realized and nothing proceeds to its ultimate possibilities.”¹³² De Certeau’s everyday persons are *bricoleurs*, they make use of the discourses and objects they find around them in a creative way.¹³³ A number of rhetorical scholars theorize rhetorical processes in a similar way. In theorizing vernacular discourse, Ono and Sloop posit that this discursive form works through a process of “pastiche” that uses “cultural fragments.”¹³⁴ Observing the significant cultural changes in the American society, McGee notes that “rhetors *make* discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence” such that the critic should understand texts “to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent.”¹³⁵ In contrast to Ono and Sloop, who link fragmentation and pastiche to a particular form of discourse, and to McGee, who sees fragmentation as the outcome of historical, cultural, and societal changes, Brummett advances a different, perhaps more radical, argument. He contends that treating rhetoric “as a set of discrete texts” is the result of a biased, “elitist social practice” of traditional rhetorical theory.¹³⁶ In actual experience, Brummett argues, rhetoric is experienced as a “field of bits, texts, and cultural artifacts which is ordered in mosaics.”¹³⁷ These ways of understanding rhetoric authorize a view of my ethnographic “data” as rhetorical fragments in which I, as critic and ethnographer I am “inevitably implicated.”¹³⁸ But instead of creating from them a “text suitable for criticism,”¹³⁹ I proceeded to coding them with a rhetorical sensibility.

Rhetorical Sensitivity and Process of Analysis

The work of the rhetorical scholar is recognizable in the kinds of questions raised, “not by the material studied”¹⁴⁰ – or in the method they use, I would add. Lucaites and Condit argue that in the classical tradition, rhetorical studies emphasized “the public, persuasive, and contextual characteristics of human discourse in situations governed by the problem of contingency.” Although these problematics and concepts continue to organize the concerns of rhetorical scholars, they are marked in contemporary rhetorical theory by novel understandings. For instance, while persuasion or influence remains one of the ways in which rhetoricians conceive of the effect of rhetoric, scholars increasingly adopted the broader notion of “rhetorical consequentiality,” in order to point, among other things, to the fact that the outcomes of rhetoric surpass or go counter to its intended goals.¹⁴¹ Another example is the notion of public, which initially served to distinguish public discourse from technical and private forms of discourse.¹⁴² But over the years, public became a complex, contested, and “elastic concept”¹⁴³ that is relentlessly explored by rhetoricians, including via such kindred concepts as “counterpublics” or “public sphere.” It is also the term that qualifies the kind of memory that rhetorical scholars study: “public memory.”

As I mentioned earlier, my study has started with a question stimulated by the scholarship in public memory, i.e.: Why is public memory located, for the most part, in conspicuous, intentional, official objects, places, or activities of remembering? The question that I originally suggested for this study—How do people remember in everyday life?—aimed at generating insight into forms and activities of public memory that are not conspicuous, intentional, or official. The subsequent questions that focused my study and

organized my data collection in the field were: How do people construct the past as a presence? What are the discourses, objects, events, and practices that allow them to discuss the past as a presence? These too are rhetorical questions, as they interrogate the ways in which the presence of the past became meaningful (significant), legible (the context that makes it recognizable), and constructed (as in invented from particular resources) for the participants in the culture. These questions also conceived of the presence of the past as a consequence of other rhetorical transactions.¹⁴⁴

My rhetorical sensitivity also influenced my process of analysis. Charmaz and Belgrave note, “The codes reflect the researcher's interests and perspectives as well as information in the data.”¹⁴⁵ While clustering the codes from the data into categories, I looked for codes that were, as I explained earlier, accomplishing the same thing from a rhetorical point of view – regardless of whether the codes were labeling fragments of speech, actions, or descriptions of events, objects, and spaces. The same logic governed the emergence of the three themes. In addition, my rhetorical sensitivity also influenced the process of dimensionalization. When I compared codes within a category in order to establish how they vary depending on properties and dimensions, I paid attention to how codes express dimensions of publicity. For instance, for the category of “rehearsing communism,” I defined the property of “access” that ranged from open access to close access. This continuum expresses the idea of how public some of the reenactments of communism were. I also paid attention to the inflection of the meanings expressed within a category, such as the earnestness – irony continuum that differentiates between the codes clustered around “communist jargon.” These are examples of rhetorical concerns that organized my process of analysis.

Theorizing in Rhetoric

In the section above, where I discussed how grounded theory is understood from the perspective of someone working in the field of rhetoric, I also attempted to highlight the common grounds shared by rhetoric and grounded theory. There are, however, some significant differences between rhetoric and grounded theory, especially in regard to the conceptualization of theory. First, grounded theory method, the creation of two sociologists, is viewed as a method stimulating theory construction and theory innovation, a goal much desired and valued by its practitioners working in such varied disciplines as sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, social work, and nursing. These are all substantive disciplines, but rhetoric is not. Rhetoric does not have “a subject matter of its own” or a “domicile”—it’s “a nomadic discipline.”¹⁴⁶ More importantly, it is a humanistic discipline¹⁴⁷ that functions within a structuring logic that is very different from that of the social science theory. Brummett, for instance, argues that rhetorical theory can be established without accumulating much evidence and that it is not tested because “it is not about something that already exists; it is about a potentiality of experience.”¹⁴⁸ To this, Ceccarelli adds that rhetoric has a “nonhierarchical conception of theory that allows for a variety of insights to be linked in web-like fashion.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, rhetorical theory is intimately linked with the practice of rhetorical criticism. One need not be involved in explicit theorizing to contribute to theory, because “criticism contributes to theorization through its heuristic capacity.”¹⁵⁰

These views on theorization are different from the ones promoted by the grounded theory practitioners, as they differentiate, for instance, between studies that result in building of theory and descriptive studies. Corbin and Strauss, for instance, posit that the

method can be used to develop a grounded theory, to do rich and thick description, or just to delineate basic themes.¹⁵¹ In my work, the use of grounded theory method allowed me to create a description of the practices of remembering in Romania. Even as my study is descriptive, it has conceptual and methodological implications for the field of rhetoric and I will return to these contributions in the last chapter of this work.

Writing

The process of analysis did not stop once I began writing, but continued while I made decisions about what to write about and how to write, and also in the process of engaging the scholarly literature on remembering, rhetoric, and the everyday. I engaged in a focused review of literature toward the later stages of my analytical process.

Engaging with the literature relevant to my analytical themes provided further occasions for comparative analysis. Scholarly literature on collective memory, public memory, and the everyday helped by further refining the understanding of my analytical themes and the role that they play in the context of remembering; at the same time, my themes also challenged and expanded on extant theorizations of remembering.¹⁵²

I chose to structure this work around the three themes that emerged from my analysis: relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present, and pursuing the past. While the next three chapters focus solely on these themes, I used the other emergent categories as a way to build and explicate the context for remembering. Each chapter heading articulates one of these themes and proceeds as follows: first, I engage with the scholarly literature relevant to the theme, then I describe the theme and the categories and subcategories subsumed under it, and finally I engage in a more detailed analysis of the theme by providing extensive illustrations.

These illustrations are constructed around “characters,” that is, around individuals that I met in the field. I choose to write in this way for three reasons. First, one of the questions raised by engagement with the field of everyday is “Whose everyday?”¹⁵³ That is, as De Certeau argues, the everyday needs to be considered as “a science of singularity.” The everyday is always to be pursued in relation to particular circumstances.¹⁵⁴ In addition, as Misztal argues, one of the issues in need of clarification in collective memory studies is “*Who* is a remembering subject?”¹⁵⁵ In structuring these analytical illustrations around particular individuals, my goal was to have a precise social and subjective location that answers the questions “Whose everyday?” and “Who remembers?” But these particular, unique locations are only a starting point from which I expand my analysis to larger societal and cultural practices, thus attempting to link the private with the public, the individual with the collective, and, more generally, localized rhetorical practices with the larger culture.

Notes

¹ Norman K. and Lincoln Denzin, Yvonna S., "The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln Denzin (London: Sage, 2000), 3.

² Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places."

³ Yvonna S and Egon G. Guba Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985), 189.

⁴ Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places."

⁵ Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric; Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric."

⁶ Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 389.

⁹ See, for instance, Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks."

¹⁰ Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places," 312.

¹¹ For instance, Katriel took an ethnographic approach to examine the rhetoric of tour-guides in Israeli pioneering settlement museums: Tamar Katriel, "'Our Future Is Where Our Past Is:’ Studying Heritage Museums as Ideological and Performative Arenas," *Communications Monographs* 60, no. 1 (1993); "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 1 (1994). Pezzullo also uses ethnographic methods to investigate "toxic tours" in Louisiana as "cultural performances of community and memory." Phaedra C Pezzullo, "Touring "Cancer Alley," Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2003).

¹² Barney A. and Anselm L. Strauss Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, 1967).

¹³ Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric."

¹⁴ Margarete Sandelowski, "Focus on Research Methods-Whatever Happened to Qualitative Description?," *Research in nursing and health* 23, no. 4 (2000): 337.

- ¹⁵ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*.
- ¹⁶ Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.
- ¹⁷ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*.
- ¹⁸ Juliet and Anselm Strauss Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008).
- ¹⁹ George E. Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 83.
- ²⁰ Harvie Ferguson, *Self-Identity and Everyday Life* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 164.
- ²¹ Svend Brinkmann, *Qualitative Inquiry in Everyday Life: Working with Everyday Life Materials* (London: Sage, 2012), 17.
- ²² George E Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual review of anthropology* 24, no. 1 (1995).
- ²³ Chris Jenks and Tiago Neves, "A Walk on the Wild Side: Urban Ethnography Meets the Flâneur," *Journal for Cultural Research* 4, no. 1 (2000): 8.
- ²⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
- ²⁵ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 209.
- ²⁶ Barney Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Mill Valley: Sociology Press, 1978), 8.
- ²⁷ Sarah Amira de la Garza, "The Four Seasons of Ethnography: A Creation-Centered Ontology for Ethnography," in *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, ed. Yoshitaka Miike Molefi Kete Asante, Jing Yin (London: Routledge, 2013), 159.
- ²⁸ I allude here to Geertz's idea of "thick description." Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- ²⁹ Lindlof, Thomas R. & Taylor Lindlof, Bryan C., *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011), 116.
- ³⁰ Thomas R. Lindlof, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), 127.
- ³¹ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 114.

- ³² Highmore, "Introduction. Questioning Everyday Life," 3.
- ³³ Barbara B Kawulich, "Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (2005).para. 14
- ³⁴ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 202.
- ³⁵ Johnson as cited in Steven J. and Robert Bogdan Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 45.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 94.
- ³⁸ Robert G Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (London: Routledge, 2002), 13-15.
- ³⁹ Raymond L Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," *Social forces* (1958).
- ⁴⁰ Patricia A. and Peter Adler Adler, *Membership Roles in Field Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1987), 35.
- ⁴¹ Robert M. Emmerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Notes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 36.
- ⁴² Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 89.
- ⁴³ Lindlof, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, 171.
- ⁴⁴ Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* 116.
- ⁴⁵ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 25.
- ⁴⁶ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 201.
- ⁴⁷ Walter Van Dyke and Bruce Victor Moore Bingham, *How to Interview*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 1.
- ⁴⁸ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 88.
- ⁴⁹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 28.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁵¹ Kathy and Linda Liska Belgrave Charmaz, "The Complexity of the Craft: Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis," in *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein & Amir B. Marvasti & Karyn D. McKinney (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), 348.

⁵² See *ibid.*, 352; Steinar and Svend Brinkmann Kvale, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 135.

⁵³ *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 100.

⁵⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 29.

⁵⁵ Kvale, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 132-33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵⁷ Taylor and Bogdan state that "the role of [such] informants is not simply to reveal their own views, but to describe what happened and how others viewed it." Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 89.

⁵⁸ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researchers in Education and Sciences*, 4th ed. (New York: Teachers College Press), 108.

⁵⁹ Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* 95.

⁶⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 9.

⁶¹ Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.

⁶² Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*.

⁶³ Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

⁶⁴ Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 1-2.

⁶⁵ Janice M. Morse, "Tussles, Tensions, and Resolutions," in *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*, ed. Phyllis Noerager Stern (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2009), 13. For some quantitative evaluations, see Antony and Kathy Charmaz Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices," in

The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory, ed. Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 1-2.

⁶⁶ Diane Walker and Florence Myrick, "Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Process and Procedure," *Qualitative Health Research* 16, no. 4 (2006): 547.

⁶⁷ Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices," 4.

⁶⁸ Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 239.

⁶⁹ Charmaz, "The Complexity of the Craft: Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis," 349.

⁷⁰ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 10.

⁷¹ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*.

⁷² de la Garza, "The Four Seasons of Ethnography: A Creation-Centered Ontology for Ethnography," 635.

⁷³ Bryant and Charmaz draw attention to the double meaning of grounded theory: it refers to both the research method, and to its result: a grounded theory. Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices," 3. In this study, grounded theory refers to the method.

⁷⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 2.

⁷⁵ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, "Grounded Theory Methodology. An Overview," *Handbook of qualitative research* (1994): 275.

⁷⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 27.

⁷⁷ See Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*; Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*; Charmaz, "The Complexity of the Craft: Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis"; Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices."

⁷⁸ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009), 3.

⁷⁹ Lucia Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008), 85.

⁸⁰ Cathy Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide* Kindle ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013), Loc 997.

⁸¹ Kvale, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 202.

⁸² Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide* Loc 997.

⁸³ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*; Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

⁸⁴ *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 198.

⁸⁵ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*.

⁸⁶ Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide* Loc 682.

⁸⁷ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 48.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹⁰ These questions were partially inspired by Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Notes*, 148.

⁹¹ Graue and Walsh write, "Touch the data. Spread it out, stack it, sort it; spread it out again, restack it, resort it. Use lots of Post-its. Handling the data gets additional data out of memory and into the record." M. Elizabeth Graue and Daniel J. Walsh, *Studying Children in Context: Theories, Methods, and Ethics* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998), 145. See also Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 23.

⁹² *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*.

⁹³ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 57-60.

⁹⁴ Charmaz, "The Complexity of the Craft: Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis," 356.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁹⁶ Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 96.

⁹⁷ Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 16.

⁹⁸ Lyn Richards, *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁰⁰ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 60-62.

¹⁰¹ Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 139.

¹⁰² See, for instance, Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

¹⁰³ These authors derived these attributes after an extensive literature review examining the various definitions and uses of “theme” in qualitative research and through performing “content analysis of the interdisciplinary and textual definitions of the term theme.” Lydia DeSantis and Doris Noel Ugarriza, "The Concept of Theme as Used in Qualitative Nursing Research," *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 22, no. 3 (2000).

¹⁰⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 135.

¹⁰⁵ Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices," 25.

¹⁰⁶ Karen Locke, "Rational Control and Irrational Free-Play: Dual Thinking Modes as Necessary Tension in Grounded Theorization," *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 192-94.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁰⁹ de la Garza, "The Four Seasons of Ethnography: A Creation-Centered Ontology for Ethnography," 161.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 139.

¹¹² Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 46.

¹¹³ See, for instance, Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 6; Walker and Myrick, "Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Process and Procedure," 548.

¹¹⁴ Celeste Condit, "Rhetorical Criticism and Audiences: The Extremes of Mcgee and Leff," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 342.

¹¹⁵ Bonnie J Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 339. See also Walter R Fisher, "Method in Rhetorical Criticism," *Southern Journal of Communication* 35, no. 2 (1969); Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Rhetorical Criticism 2009. A Study in Method," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, ed. S. J. Parry-Giles and J. M. Hogan (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

¹¹⁶ Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," 345.

¹¹⁷ Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," 271.

¹¹⁸ Charles E Morris III, "(Self-) Portrait of Prof. Rc: A Retrospective," *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 1 (2010): 12. See also Brummet who gives a detailed description between rhetorical theory and scientific theory. Barry Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," *Communication Education* 33, no. 2 (1984). See also Campbell, who argues for the "reaffirmation of neo-classicism as an alternative to methodological dogmatism." John Angus Campbell, "Rhetorical Theory in the Twenty-First Century: A Neo-Classical Perspective," *Southern Journal of Communication* 63, no. 4 (1998).

¹¹⁹ Edwin Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44, no. 4 (1980). Fisher and Farrell have adopted similar positions. Fisher posits that the "essential stance of the critic should be informed innocence." The notion of "informed innocence" is in fact very similar to the concept of "theoretical sensitivity." "However much information the critic brings to a work, writes Fisher, "it must not blind her or him to the information provided by the work itself." Walter R. Fisher, "Genre: Concepts and Applications in Rhetorical Criticism," *ibid.*: 299. Farrell posits that a critic has to "remain subservient to the meaning of the artifact." Thomas B Farrell, "Critical Models in the Analysis of Discourse," *ibid.*: 313.

¹²⁰ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "Object and Method in Rhetorical Criticism: From Wichelns to Leff and Mcgee," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 303.

¹²¹ See Locke, "Rational Control and Irrational Free-Play: Dual Thinking Modes as Necessary Tension in Grounded Theorization; Antony Bryant, "Grounded Theory and Pragmatism: The Curious Case of Anselm Strauss," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*

10, no. 3 (2009); Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices."

¹²² James Jasinski, "The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001).

¹²³ Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," 99.

¹²⁴ Leah Ceccarelli, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of Science," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 325.

¹²⁵ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 148.

¹²⁶ Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," 341.

¹²⁷ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 149.

¹²⁸ Bryant, "Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices," 15.

¹²⁹ Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience : Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 53.

¹³⁰ Locke, "Rational Control and Irrational Free-Play: Dual Thinking Modes as Necessary Tension in Grounded Theorization," 570.

¹³¹ Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness," *Yale French Studies* 73, no. 10 (1987): 57.

¹³² Maurice Blanchot, "Everyday Speech," *ibid.*: 16.

¹³³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xiii.

¹³⁴ Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communications Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 23.

¹³⁵ Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 279.

¹³⁶ Barry Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 67.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

- ¹³⁸ Morris III, "(Self-) Portrait of Prof. Rc: A Retrospective," 21.
- ¹³⁹ McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," 288.
- ¹⁴⁰ Thomas O. Sloan et al., "Report of the Committee on the Advancement and Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism," in *The Prospect of Rhetoric. Report of the National Developmental Project.*, ed. Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971), 220.
- ¹⁴¹ Blair, "Introduction," 5.
- ¹⁴² See, for instance, John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit, "Introduction," in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory. A Reader*, ed. Celeste Michelle Condit John Louis Lucaites, and Sally Caudill (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 3.
- ¹⁴³ Blair, "Introduction," 5.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-5.
- ¹⁴⁵ Charmaz, "The Complexity of the Craft: Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis," 355.
- ¹⁴⁶ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory. A Reader*, ed. and Sally Caudill Celeste Michelle Condit John Louis Lucaites (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 195.
- ¹⁴⁷ Among others, see Michael Leff, "The Idea of Rhetoric as Interpretive Practice: A Humanist's Response to Gaonkar," *Western Journal of Communication* 58(1993); Bonnie J Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," *ibid.* 65, no. 3 (2001).
- ¹⁴⁸ Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification."
- ¹⁴⁹ Ceccarelli, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of Science."
- ¹⁵⁰ James Jasinski, "The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism," *ibid.*: 252.
- ¹⁵¹ Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 16.
- ¹⁵² Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, 165.
- ¹⁵³ Highmore, "Introduction. Questioning Everyday Life," 14.

¹⁵⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, ix.

¹⁵⁵ Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 5.

RELATING THE PRESENT TO THE PAST

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

William Faulkner

“Ceaușescu has not died”

Romanian song

Introduction

Scholars of collective memory have argued relentlessly that we should conceive of memory not as a product, but as a process, not as a noun, but as a verb: *remembering*. The use of the gerund is meant to clarify that memory is a continuous activity or a state of being.¹ More importantly, it is meant to imply that *it is happening now*. While Aristotle² insists that memory is of the past, Bal presses us to consider that “the need is of the present.”³

But the past and the present are not as distinct and distant from each other as we sometimes like to think. Huysen contends that the erosion of the boundaries between past and present is a consequence of the “voracious” culture of the past that is produced in our times.⁴ For Stormer, on the other hand, the issue is related to the ways we experience time: “the present is always emerging from a receding past, which generates an endless need for discourse to reconstitute where and when ‘now’ is.”⁵ While Huysen’s explanation inscribes the relationship between present and past within specific cultural/historical conditions, Stormer’s is an ontological circumscription. These two ways of understanding the past’s existence in the present are not incommensurable; the relationships between past and present always involve the intersection of cultural/historical and ontological concerns. But the ontological view challenges the

cultural/historical preoccupation that pervades much of the scholarship on remembering, suggesting that we develop memory practices to locate the present – and ourselves in it – due to a deep experiential need. The cultural/historical focus attempts to draw attention to how these practices are “localized”: they depend on the particularities of contexts that we need to stabilize even as these contexts slip away with every moment that passes⁶.

Investigations into memory and remembering almost always take for granted that the present and past are two discretely separated entities; the work of memory scholars is thus to conceptualize the connections between them. In sociology, for example, memory work predominantly describes the relationship between present and past in two ways. The first is to see the past as an instrument used (manipulated) for particular agendas of the present. The second is to consider memory’s selectivity as a necessary consequence of the fact that the past is always seen through the lenses of the present and therefore shaped by the specific experiences, cultural norms, and social structures of the present. Both conceptualizations shed light on the malleability and/or persistence of memory⁷.

Bodnar’s work, for instance, is emblematic of the first approach. *Remaking America* is the story of memory’s ongoing renewal in the present: United States memory is continually rejuvenated as a result of vernacular (ethnic, local) and official (national, governmental) struggles over how to publicly commemorate significant historical events⁸. The second perspective is richly illustrated by Mead’s *Philosophy of the Present*, in which he argues that the “accepted past lies in a present and is subject, itself, to possible reconstruction.”⁹ He contends that the past is constructed from the standpoint of the present and that new arriving presents require new histories¹⁰. For him, there is no past existing “back there,” as the past is continually recreated in an emergent present in

which people continually interact with their environment.¹¹ Schwartz and numerous other scholars have engaged Mead's theorization of past and present in their analyses of collective remembering.¹² Halbwachs is also invested in the notion that the present dictates the past, as "even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu."¹³ Of course, these two ways of conceiving the relation between past and present are not mutually exclusive; often both are present in a given work and it is a question of which is emphasized.

Even as they adopt these positions in their work¹⁴, rhetorical scholars stress the ways in which the manipulation of the past and the selectivity of memory are effects of rhetoricity, not of the usability, or manipulation, of the past per se. The construction of public memories is a rhetorical process;¹⁵ as such, it involves invention, which is the selection of appropriate rhetorical resources so that a subject matter is constructed in a particular way.¹⁶ For instance, Mandziuk reveals how the debates over Sojourner Truth carefully selected particular elements of her representation and deflected others.¹⁷ Hasian and Franks similarly contend that the popularity of Goldhagen's "Hitler's Willing Executioners" was owed to the fact that "its arguments tapped into the reservoir of feelings and beliefs that existed in the collective memories and its readers,"¹⁸ while Blair, Jeppeson and Pucci demonstrate how the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's contentious relationship with the past that it commemorates is an effect of its postmodern architecture¹⁹.

In addition, for rhetorical scholars the present is not exactly a lens that determines a particular view on the past; rather it constitutes the context in which the consequences of public memories as rhetorical constructions can be assessed. Rhetoric's exigency to

address audiences *in the present* subsumes the past under the present. The issue is whether the past, constructed in a certain way, constitutes an apt response to a present rhetorical situation.²⁰

Dickinson, for example, argues that Old Pasadena's rhetorical force as a "place fully involved in the past" is a way of responding to the difficulties of postmodern life.²¹ Biesecker shows how popular culture texts about the World War II constructed a particularly influential response to a "contemporary crisis of national identity."²² Collings Eves attests to the emergence of African-American women's cookbooks as sites of memory that carve space for remembering "in the absence of public memorials and access to official records."²³ These and other scholars attend to discrete rhetorical accomplishments for their ability to respond and (at least partially) redress a certain aspect of the present.

My ethnographic work on the memory of communism in Romania revealed some aspects that resonate with the ways the scholarship on remembering understands the relationships between the present and the past. One of the major themes that emerged from my observations but especially from the interviews is *relating the present to the past*. One of my early memos read: "People constantly relate the present to the past. Thus the past becomes a somewhat stable lens for referencing and seeing the present. It is so much so, that, in many ways, communism is not a remembrance, but a presence. As one of the people with whom I had an informal conversation told me, it's as if "one could touch communism."

Conceptual Categories

Cultures have available a variety of strategies for conceptualizing the relationships between their presents and their pasts. Brockmeier suggests that such cultural strategies include “configuring some events as past and over, other events as still present and alive, and again others as stretching into the future.”²⁴ In Romania, given the overthrow of the communist regime in 1989, communism *should* be past and over but is not. It is still present and alive. It is also stretching into the future. My analysis revealed that relating the present to the past subsumes at least three strategies of conceptualizing relationships between present and past: comparing the present to the past; explaining the present in terms of the past; and defining Romanian identity, as well as generational identities, in relation to the past. “Relating” then is used here in a double sense: it is both constructing and establishing relations (between present and past) and relating an account (of the present through the past).

Comparing the Present to the Past

Comparing the present to the past subsumes two categories that together give this concept nuances similar to the grammatical degrees of comparison, as they express relationships ranging from equality to superiority. First, to draw comparisons between *now* and *then* is to indicate a greater degree of a certain quality of either past or present. It establishes relations of preeminence. According to my participants, some things are better now than during communism (“*Now I can express myself freely,*” a taxi driver told me), and some things are worse (“*I think that people were then, at least in the early 80s, happy. But now Romanians are not happy,*” one of my interviewees thought). Second, evaluating some aspect of the present as *just like during communism* establishes a relation

of equality between present and past (*“Today we are exactly in 1947,”* I overheard someone saying to his companion in a coffee shop).

The other two conceptual categories, explaining the present in terms of the past and defining identity (Romanian identity and generational identity) in terms of the past, are about giving accounts of the present via the communist past. In other words, the past accounts for the present experience. These accounts in turn are based on establishing yet other types of relationships to the past, including consequentiality and continuity.

Explaining the Present in Terms of the Past

Explaining the present in terms of the past is founded on conceptualizing relationships of consequentiality (the present is a consequence of the past) and continuity (the past continues into the present). An example of consequentiality is to explain, as one of my collocutors did, *“Many things do not work well because of what it was before.”* The fact that the past carries on in the present is expressed in instances like, *“I think it’s about a continuity. In 1989, those people [the communists, the secret police officers, the regime’s people] did not go home.”*

Defining Identity

Defining Generational Identity

Defining generational identity in terms of the past is undergirded by a relation of contingency with a specific time in the past. Being “in touch” with a certain communist period provides the grounds for identifying and claiming membership in a generation. For instance, one participant stated, *“For me, our generation means those people who are born before ‘81, those who got to live a little under communism and have memories... “*

Defining Romanian Identity

Defining Romanian identity in terms of the past has negative, positive and neutral tones. In the negative, the communist past sets up a sort of doomed identity for the present and possibly for the future. As one of my interviewees told me, "*We carry communism's genetic information.*" The positive version registers the communist past as an element of contrast with capitalist products. "*Communist products differentiate us from the mass-production,*" an acquaintance said with a sort of satisfaction. The neutral variation accepts communism as an inevitable part of Romanian identity, without having any evaluative inflections. It is neither good nor bad. "*Communist things are Romanian things,*" I recorded after an informal, terse encounter with a hurried bar owner.

The variety of relationships described above suggests that, at any given time, the "syntax" of remembering in a particular culture is quite rich and complex. The existence of different principles of "combining" present and past allows for a more nuanced understanding of remembering and its movements. On one hand, the relation of "preeminence" establishes the superiority of either present or past. In a similar way, conceiving Romanian identity in terms of the communist past establishes the kind of ascendancy the past has over the present. Given that they can express both a negative and a positive relation to the past, preeminence and ascendancy attempt to establish vertical connections that express influence. Equality, continuity, and consequentiality are, on the contrary, horizontal relations that propose the existence, in this particular case, of levels or shades of intimacy between present and past.

In what follows, I provide descriptive accounts accompanied by analytical discussion to illustrate not only the formulation of these relationships, but also the conditions necessary for these formulations. In the process, I engage relevant theorizations that help to clarify the inquiry; at the same time, I hope that the inquiry itself can help clarify or nuance extant theory.

The descriptive fragments give me the opportunity to show how these connections between present and past emerge from a more general context of the past's persistence in the present, but also how they depend on more specific contextual conditions. As I stated in my introduction, the subsections are built around the "characters" of individuals I met in the field – "the student", "the family doctor," "the theatre director" and so on. I used this strategy in order to ground my writing into the particular subject positions that informed my analysis. In other words, this way of writing assists me in specifying and maintaining the awareness of the everyday that I am addressing.

The Students

"Just Like during Communism"

On Friday, June 8, I was standing outside the National Museum of Contemporary Art, observing people arrive for a theater performance. "X mm din Y km" (X millimeters from Y kilometers) was publicized as a project aspiring to understand Romania's recent history, and more specifically to interrogate the ability of the secret police's archives to clarify the past. The announcement for the show, shared by one of my Facebook friends, stated, "All performances will be followed by a dialogue with the audience." Additional shows were scheduled for Saturday and Sunday and I was going to attend them. I was hoping that the post-performance dialogue would provide a wealth of relevant data for my research, as well as a good opportunity for recruiting participants for my interviews.

Located inside the West wing of the Parliament's Palace, formerly known as Casa Poporului (the House of the People), the museum converted an area once designed as private quarters for the communist elites into an artistic space that invites in ordinary people.²⁵

The transformation enacted with the establishment of the museum occurred in the aftermath of a larger-scale conversion. Initially intended to house the centralized seat of power for the communist regime, the House of the People itself had been converted into the home of the new democratic parliament. On one hand, as an act of revision carried out by the post-communist leadership, this conversion is a turning away from the past, an attempt to bury previous history under a new meaning. As such it is less about relating the present to the past and more about severing the ties between them. Neither fully erased, nor fully designated as a site of memory, the House of the People's relationship with the past remains ambiguous. Due to its uncomfortable dimensions²⁶, an erasure in this particular case is out of the question²⁷. In its immensity, this building carries with it the memory of the destruction that shadowed its construction. According to Cavalcanti, almost 3000 houses (and an equal number of families evicted), numerous historic buildings, including a monastery, were demolished, thus "breaking Bucharest's historic continuity" and shattering the city's urban form.²⁸

Over the years, Casa Poporului became the target of various debates and symbolic engagements, as it is as an intense node of convergence for memory, politics, and civil discourse.²⁹

*At the time of my visit, a temporary installation guarded the museum's front entrance. Two scale models facing each other were positioned on each side of the door. One reproduced the House of the People; the other recreated the future Romanian People's Salvation Cathedral. The two miniatures were designed to resemble the candle sandboxes in the narthex of the Romanian Orthodox churches. The ritual requires that upon entering the church the devout Eastern Orthodox make the sign of the cross, offer a donation, venerate the icons, and light candles for the wellbeing of the living and/or for the peace of the soul of the dead. The scale model of the cathedral coincided with the candle sandbox for the living; instead of the traditional sign *vii* (living), the artist re-labeled the "box" as *mulțumiți* (content). The scale model of the House of the People paralleled the candle sandbox for the dead; instead of the traditional sign *morți* (dead), the artist re-named the "box" *nemulțumiți* (discontent). As I rode the elevator to the*

fourth and last floor of the Museum, I noticed the excavations for the foundations of the new cathedral.

This installation punctuates and adds to the heated debates around the construction of the Cathedral; among other things, the controversy focused on the relationships between the present influence of the church and its past role as a supporter of the communist regime³⁰. The artistic intervention functions as an interrogation by comparing the present plans for building a colossal Eastern-orthodox cathedral with the communists' gigantic House of the People. The Cathedral will be erected in a formerly abandoned area directly behind the House of the People, thus forcing a very palpable juxtaposition between church and state.

In my subsequent analysis, I associated the artistic installation with the category “just like during communism,” a syntagm directly borrowed from the language of my interviewees. As Vaniousha, one of my interlocutors, stated while describing the current *modus operandi* of state institutions,

“Practically... there is a source of power.... that is a source of authority that orders something to be done. And on the chain of command, things get done. And this is just like during Ceausescu's time.”

From a strictly grammatical perspective “just like during communism” expresses a degree of equality between the two terms of comparison. From this perspective, regardless of the quality or aspect considered, the present and the past *are the same*.

From a semantic perspective, however, “just like during communism” has the appearance of a simile, which is “based upon the resemblance between two objects of different kinds;”³¹ in this case, the assumption is that the present resembles to the past. As an argumentative strategy, the simile tries to establish a relationship of identity between the terms of comparison, but the affirmation of identity is not as strong as it would be

with a metaphor; “like” suggests that only some of the properties of the past can be applied to the present.³² More importantly, relations of similarity are asymmetrical, and the direction of asymmetry reveals “the relative salience of the stimuli.”³³ The focus here is on the present as subject of this relationship; at the same time, it is the past that offers the more salient stimuli.³⁴ Vaniousha does not say, “What happened in the past is just like what happens today.” The direction of asymmetry indicates that the present is considered more similar to the past than vice versa. In other words, the present has the ability to capture some elements of the past that are considered noteworthy. Vaniousha’s example selects particular features of the present that illuminate characteristics of the past. These relationships of similarity conceive of the present as a variation of the past.

Vaniousha’s statement and the artistic installation make the present intelligible through a frame of the past. The familiarity with the past renders the present comprehensible in particular ways.³⁵ In order to be familiar with the past and establish similarities between past and present, one needs to possess certain knowledge of the past. While the present can only be known through direct experience, there are a number of modalities of mediation that grant access to the past.

Standing by the entrance gave me the chance to observe people as they enter, to eavesdrop on their conversations, and to chitchat with some of the people I already knew from my previous life in Romania. As I was waiting I was greeted by Irina, a TV reporter from a local station. While bringing her up to date about my current whereabouts, I told her that I was studying the memory of communism in Romania. To this, she replied in a mildly sarcastic voice:

“I thought that people do not want to remember. I thought that all they want is to forget.” Her reaction suggested that amongst some Romanians forgetting communism is looked upon with disappointment and contempt.

A few moments later, I noticed a very recent acquaintance heading toward the security check beyond the glass doors. Her name was Claudia and she used to welcome me every morning at the gym by my parents’ house. The next day I took advantage of this serendipitous meeting to ask her if she would like to be interviewed. Not only did she agree, but she also conveyed her boyfriend’s interest in joining our conversation. I

welcomed the opportunity to have two simultaneous interviews and of a naturally occurring conversation. I was particularly excited about this unexpected request, as I remembered the boyfriend's thought-provoking intervention in the post-performance dialogue. Because he had complained that the performance did not portray "the real communism" I was eager to understand his take on the matter. At this time I also noticed and registered in my memos people's eagerness to talk about communism.

"I, Too, Was Born During Communism!"

During our meeting the following week, I found out that Claudia and her boyfriend, both in their mid 20s, were students at local universities. Most relevantly, Claudia experienced the communist regime for only the first two months of her life and Pavel for his first two years. Their families' accounts of their eventful births are the only autobiographical details that connect them with communism.

In lieu of direct experiences and personal recollections from communism, they use family accounts and stories from close relationships as the best next thing. Equipped in such a way, even as they do not remember the past directly, they are still able to "see" reminiscences of communism around them. As Olick affirms, "groups can even produce memories in individuals of events that they never 'experienced' in any direct sense."³⁶

"One can see communism's reminiscences in the medical system," complained Claudia, somewhat aggravated. "Well, it is also about.... Ahmmm... Wages and the fact that the doctors are paid inadequately, but... They are human beings after all! I mean... one cannot... One sees someone dying next to him/her and one does not do something about it? My mom almost died at birth. His mom also almost died while giving birth."

Pavel was quick to underline a difference:

"In my case, it was during communism."

Claudia replied:

"This story with my mom is also from communism. I, too, was born during communism!" Her voice was slightly angry as she tried to authenticate her direct relationship with communism. "The doctor was not there when she got to the hospital and it was.... She was not dilated enough and they let her suffer for one night and one day... For what? She could have died at any moment. And this is still happening now. I mean... I recently heard about a similar case. It happened in the same way, they let a woman suffer very much because... But I cannot remember who told me... Because the doctor was not in the hospital... In fact, he was out of the country..." In the tone of her voice I could sense a mixture of sadness, indignation, and confusion.

Although these statements appear as individual memory and personal ways of relating the past to the present, they are in fact dependent on a larger context of

remembering. These accounts are linked to broader public discourses and everyday exchanges pointing to the corruption of state institutions as these structures are perceived to perpetuate the bad habits of the communist regime. More specifically, the Romanian healthcare system has been under heavy debate for a good number of years and part of the discussion is focused on the practice of *șpagă* (greasing, bribing). As another interviewee put it,

“There is this thing with the ‘small tokens of appreciation’ ... They are perpetuated everywhere. ... Let’s take our neighbor, M., who is a family doctor. She always receives stuff although she does not ask for anything, but people feel obligated... you go to the doctor, right? You bring a chocolate, a pack of coffee...”

An opinion study from 2009³⁷ found that one in five respondents considered corruption to be the main problem of the healthcare system in Romania; the main cause of the corruption was the social custom of giving or receiving bribes. About 8.2% of the respondents identified negligence and lack of interest of the medical establishment as serious problems. Issues of corruption, stories and debates about bribes and doctors’ lack of professionalism are much discussed in Romanian newspapers, on radio and TV talk shows, and on blogs and forums³⁸. Many of these stories make room for at least suggesting if not fully supporting a comparison between communism and the present situation. In one instance, the guest of a late-night TV show I stumbled upon during my stay in Romania stated,

“We have been habituated to give șpagă (bribes) to the medical personnel!” He offered this as a comment on the healthcare reform.

On one hand, Claudia’s statement established a similarity between what she encountered in the present and what she knew from others about the past. More exactly, in order to see in the present the reminiscences of the past, she assimilated or

appropriated others' memories. She recounted the memories of her parents as if they were her own. These memories acquired special salience because of their autobiographical value and the fact of having been shared by close family members. In theory, the story of her birth is nothing but an individual memory, and yet she made sense of it by adopting inflections from more public forms of discourse. However, the more relevant point here is the way in which she uses the story of her acquaintance (*"I recently heard about a case..."*) as an opportunity for drawing a parallel between present and past. As De Certeau argues, memory "responds more than it records."³⁹ This instance exemplifies how individual memory, public memory, and everyday life intersect and articulate each other.

"We Speak from Fragments"

In addition to the stories they appropriate from family, teachers, and other trustworthy persons in their lives, Claudia and Pavel experience the communist past as mediated by books, museum exhibits, memoirs, movies, theater performances and the media. In fact, they are fully aware of the multitude of sources they have available for acquiring knowledge of the past.

At some point during the interview, Pavel cautioned me about the fact that, "We speak from hearsay, from fragments." When I asked what he meant by this, he explained, "I only have fragments... Fragments of movies, fragments of what remains after one had visited a museum... So... a collection of stuff... What one sees in a show... Then one hears the opinions of one or another..."

As Blair, Dickinson and Ott underscore, public memories are inventions because they "are constructed of rhetorical resources." As a process of selection and (re)creation, rhetorical invention thus supports the partiality of memory.⁴⁰ To understand public memory as invention is to recognize its capacity to be created and recreated over and

over again. In many ways, public memories are like McGee's rhetors that "make discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence."⁴¹ My data, however, reveal mostly the ways in which public memories themselves serve as rhetorical resources. The above interview fragment offers significant insight in this direction.

According to Halbwachs' sociology of memory, "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories."⁴² From a rhetorical perspective, this means that people's remembering is a continuous activity of amassing, filtering, (re)organizing, and appropriating the various rhetorical resources that touch them in one way or another.⁴³ This process is never finished, as individuals constantly come in contact with rhetorically salient processes and artifacts. The public memories that we traditionally consider in our work, such as museums, memorials, and monuments, are not inevitably afforded more importance than other rhetorical sources. My interviewee mentioned movies, museums, performances and others' opinions in the same breath, which suggests that in the economy of everyday life, self-conscious public memories are not automatically higher in an imaginary hierarchy of sources usable for remembering.

Inspired by Bakhtin, Wertsch points out that individuals' stories about the past are "multivoiced:" they are influenced by a sort of compilation of other texts and voices from the culture. Consequently, the task would be to listen for and recognize the diverse fragments that compose these stories and their provenance⁴⁴. This focus on texts, however, does injustice to the multiplicity of forms of influence on remembering and to the variety of resources supporting the invention of memory. Moreover, the texts Wertsch chooses to be concerned with are state-sanctioned histories of the past.

Similarly, McCormick draws attention to the ways official discourse is selectively re-appropriated at the level of everyday talk.⁴⁵ Middleton et al. however offer a more comprehensive picture when they describe rhetoric as being constituted “through a combination of material contexts, social relationships, identities, consciousnesses, and (interrelated) rhetorical acts that produce meanings and that are coconstructed between rhetor, audience, and particular contexts.”⁴⁶ Considering remembering as such a complex rhetorical process attunes us to the richness of its dynamic features.

My interview fragment suggests that we should rightfully add everyday talk to the official and popular texts we are accustomed to consider in our scholarly inquiries on public memory. Pavel mentioned that the place or the knowledge he speaks from about the past is constituted from bits of information coming from several directions; one of these directions is everyday talk, or what Pavel calls hearing “the opinions of one or another.”

“A State of Physical Sickness”

The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance in Sighet has also been a source of the students’ knowledge and memory of communism. Situated by Romania’s border with Ukraine, the museum represents the conversion of a former communist political prison into a space dedicated to the remembrance of the communist history and to the memorialization of the its victims.

Claudia and Pavel had become acquainted with the museum as the result of a series of chance occurrences. Claudia, with Pavel’s help, recounted in the interview,

“I did some volunteering work for a non-profit organization that was planning an event dedicated to Eminescu. I did marketing and public relations and also some fundraising for them. And with the occasion of this event, I met a teacher... He was teaching logic for high-school students. And he used to have a house... He still has a

house, in fact, in Leordina. Leordina is somewhere... 60 kilometers?" She turned toward Pavel to ask him to confirm the distance.

"60... 40 kilometers from Sighet", said Pavel.

"40 kilometers from Sighetul Marmăției," Claudia repeated and then continued. "And he invited us over to that house for the summer. And we plainly and simply went there. And for the whole period we commuted between Sighetul Marmăției and Leordina almost everyday. And we visited the memorial for a few days in a row. "

The museum, visited in the context of a summer vacation, makes a strong impression on Claudia. Furthermore, she points to the visit to the museum as the moment when her interest in communist history was triggered:

"My interest in communism was effectively triggered when I saw the museum. That was the moment when it was truly triggered. Until then, it was, like Pavel says, from hearsay. But when I saw the memorial... It is very well equipped. And I also bought those books because... It really impressed me. I was entering those cells and it was almost like they were charging me with a negative energy. Every time I came out of the museum I was in a state of physical sickness. I could not bear to stay too much inside. Pavel used to stay for several hours, but I could not...."

From a rhetorical perspective, the task would be to examine "how particular memories capture the imagination and produce attachments."⁴⁷ The Sighet museum is in fact visually choreographed for just such a reaction, from the maps with crosses marking Romania as a territory of death, to the horrific simplicity of *Neagra* (meaning black room, the torture room), and to the distressing barbed wires, and the harrowing statuary titled "The procession of the sacrificed" in the courtyard of the museum.⁴⁸ Claudia's emotions are, to some extent, a proof that the memorial/museum's rhetoric is effective.

At the same time, these emotions could also explain the long-lasting effects of the museum, as Claudia's engagement with the Sighet's memory of communism continued even after she had returned from her trip. Later on, the visit to the museum became instrumental in completing a school assignment that required her to reflect on the idea of "Romanian strength." The impressions and the knowledge acquired at the memorial were

thus included in her definition of Romanian identity. Claudia created a positive connection between communism and Romanian identity, by selecting a particular episode from the communist history that she then made emblematic of the idea of Romanian strength.

“When I received the assignment, I immediately thought of the memorial. I immediately started to browse several books that I had bought from the museum’s store. And I created a [performative] moment on communism... It was about what communism meant in the life of a mother whose husband and children were in the anti-communist resistance movement. They were in the mountains and once in a while she was waiting for them with food; she knew she was being followed by the secret police and she was terribly afraid of being caught. And yet she was vanquishing that fear for her family.”

De Certeau notes that memory “is mobilized relative to what happens - something unexpected that it is clever enough to transform into an opportunity. It inserts itself into something encountered by chance, on the other's ground.”⁴⁹ Memoirs about resistance such as the one cited in the interview fragment are usually used as proof of the tremendous suffering produced by the communism regime⁵⁰. Among others, the Sighet memorial itself provides this specific interpretative frame.⁵¹ As Bădică writes, the museum “makes a strong claim on Romanian national identity, providing a narrative of victimhood and sacrifice/resistance.”⁵² On one hand, Claudia acts in accordance with the museum’s compelling claim when she further integrates the story from the memoir into the notion of Romanian identity. On the other hand, however, Claudia used the assignment as an occasion to disrupt the reading of this genre of memoirs as stories of pain and victimhood and to insert the woman’s memory as a positive characteristic (strength) of Romanian identity. While responding to a specific moment in the present (her assignment), Claudia reworked the past by using the memoir and the memorial as rhetorical resources for inventing a discourse on Romanian identity. But while

appropriating their discourse on sacrifice, she interrupts “the victimizing version of the past” affirmed by the museum/memorial⁵³. In addition, Claudia’s individual rendition of the communist past was shared and disseminated in the public space of the classroom.

“A History that Is Hidden from Us”

The interview with the two students raises questions about the theorization of remembering in the absence of lived experience. Pressing the specific Romanian context of the memory of communism against extant theorizations such as “prosthetic memory,”⁵⁴ “textually mediated memory,”⁵⁵ or “organic and dead” historical memory⁵⁶ has the potential to offer some productive tensions.

For instance, Wertsch proposes that when memory is not “grounded in direct, immediate experience of events,” others provide “textual resources” that mediate between events and our understanding of them.⁵⁷ More importantly, he argues that collective memory should be framed in terms of knowledge of these texts and less in terms of remembering; by “texts” he means the state’s official histories.⁵⁸

In the Romanian context, however, the writing of official histories of the communist past was and still is a difficult task. My interlocutors complained in fact about not having learned the history of communism in school:

Pavel: “We should learn and know our recent history, but it is a history that is hidden from us. We learn history in school, all the history except this one... The children... The textbooks do not have any presentation on this topic...”

Claudia: “They only have two pages toward the end... “

After 1989, the discipline of history and historians themselves were in crisis. After long decades of being ideologically imbued, the regeneration of Romanian history as a discipline has been “a long and tortuous process;”⁵⁹ and because they played a significant role in supporting the previous regime by rewriting history according to

ideological principles, many historians were “untrustworthy and discredited as interpreters of past and present.”⁶⁰ Consequently, the renewal of course books on Romanian history to include the communist past had progressed extremely slowly.⁶¹ The first textbook on the history of communism was introduced in the high school curriculum, but simply as an optional course, only in 2008.⁶² Given their age, the course book came too late for Pavel and Claudia. Two years earlier, however, the report of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania was released. Based on the report’s arguments, President Traian Băsescu officially condemned the communist regime in the Romanian Parliament. The report was supposed “to offer a rigorous and synthetic document” on “institutions, methods, and personalities that made possible the crimes and abuses of the communist dictatorship.” Because of its political entanglements—commissioned by the President, crafted by right-wing intellectuals—the report was met with distrust in political circles, in the media⁶³, and also in academic/intellectual circles.⁶⁴

In this context, it was quasi-impossible for my interlocutors to rely on the mediation of texts in their quest for knowledge about communism. The question thus becomes what other mediations are available, efficient, and active.

Like Wertsch’s theorization, Landsberg’s concept of “prosthetic memory” is supposed to be helpful for discussing memories that “are not natural, not the product of lived experience.” In her view, the memories “derived from engagement with a mediated representation” like a movie, a TV program, or a museum still serve as “basis for mediated collective identification.”⁶⁵ For Paul, however, these types of mediations are insufficient for producing a full picture of memory and history. When he says, “*I only*

have fragments... Fragments of movies, fragments of what remains after one had visited a museum...” he speaks not only about the fact that he has to make sense of the past from bits of information,⁶⁶ but he also points to the partiality, the incompleteness of these forms of memory. This sense of incompleteness is perhaps one of the factors that contribute to the impetus to pursue communism, a theme that I will address later. But even partial and incomplete, these mediations contribute to maintaining awareness of the past and while they are not lived memory, they still are, like Landsberg argues, experienced. However, Landsberg’s prosthetic memories are defined as alternative modalities of memory transmission in cases in which kinship ties between live witnesses and the younger generations are broken.⁶⁷ In a similar way, Halbwachs suggests that people are disconnected from some historical memories, while being connected to others through commemorations and other festive occasions⁶⁸ – yet other forms of mediation that create connections to the past in the absence of living remembering individuals. The circumstances of my Romanian studies however challenge these useful conceptual resources to ponder once more on their definitions. The circumstances of my Romanian study, however, challenge this opposition between memory’s “liveliness” and its mediated forms. In Romania, it is not either/or – mediated and “live” memory forms are co-present. Ultimately, this co-presence suggests the existence of different degrees of mediation.

The communist past in Romania is recent; it has a heavily material presence in the urban landscape, in apartment buildings and constructions left over from communism; it lives on in small objects that surface not only in private homes, but also at flea markets and antique fairs; it is also copiously circulated in the media and in cultural products such

as books, movies, performances, museum exhibits, and music; and it still haunts the language used in institutions and in everyday life. In addition, many generations that lived through it are still around to offer testimonies and to pass their directly lived experience onto the younger generations; for them, many of the everyday surroundings, relations, encounters, and routines—and also happenstances—are reminiscent of communism. As I learned from my interviews, apartment buildings, stray dogs, crowded public transportation, sitting in or seeing a line, a brief shortage of hot water, the speech of a politician, the atmosphere and behavior they encountered in state institutions, certain restaurants and confectionaries, and foods and cars remind people of communism. These ways of seeing the past in the present are not individual. As Halbwachs pointed out, recent histories “are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relationship at this moment.”⁶⁹

For Pavel and Claudia, remembering is a process in some ways facilitated by texts, museums, or other cultural products. In other ways, remembering is also a matter of lived experience, because all of the aforementioned material traces and reminiscences of communism are still around as an integral part of daily exchanges and activities. So, even as remembering is partly mediated, and even as some generations do not possess direct experience of the past, the “organic” connection with the past is not lost. The communist past is not dead and its remembering is not entirely delegated to *lieux de memoire*;⁷⁰ in fact, there are not too many such places to which Romanians could relegate the memory of the communist past.⁷¹

In such a context it thus becomes especially important to consider the ways in which remembering occurs “in conversational and communication contexts.”⁷² “The

medium of actual interaction”⁷³ becomes especially salient in circumstances in which the past has not completely died out.

The activist

„The Same Name, the Same Project,
the Same Style. Unbelievable!”

I met Maradona on Saturday, after the second performance at the National Museum of Contemporary Art. He was standing outside the circle of chairs arranged by the organizers for the discussion, so I had to turn my head to register his face. Because the lights were only covering the circle assigned for the dialogue, the left half of his body was enveloped in shadow. When the director of the performance, now turned mediator, opened the conversation with the question, “How present is the recent past?,” Maradona elicited my curiosity by decisively affirming that Romanians have no “appetite” for civic participation.

At the end of the dialogue I approached Maradona. I introduced myself to him, I briefly described my research and asked him for a meeting. We exchanged email addresses, and after I provided him in writing with more details, including my IRB-approved recruitment letter, he proposed a meeting in his office on June 21, around 1:30 pm.

On the day of the appointment, I rode the bus from downtown to his office. The bus window revealed to my naked eyes part of the sheer destruction in the Matache area, a neighborhood located in the proximity of the Bucharest North railway station. Although I had previously read on the Internet about the civil society and professional associations’ protests against this destruction, and came across several pictures depicting the magnitude of this demolition, I haven’t actually seen it until the day of my commute to Maradona’s office. Mountains of dirt, demolition and construction equipment replaced now the old houses I had passed by so many times on my way to the railway station. The bulldozers had ruined my familiarity with the landscape.

The Bucharest’s Hala Matache Măcelarul (Matache the Butcher Market), a 19th-century farmer’s market, was demolished by the City Hall to make way for a new large boulevard connecting the north to the south of Bucharest (more exactly, Victory Square and the government headquarters to Casa Poporului, housing the Parliament). Other old houses in the area have been demolished in the same breath with the historical market, leading to the eviction of numerous Roma and other urban poor families.⁷⁴ The destruction of this area of the city, accompanied by the evictions, functioned as a strong

reminder of the demolitions carried out by the communist regime. As Pavel, one of the student interviewees told me during our interview,

“Ceaușescu, may God forgive him, had this project... to make a big boulevard from Piața Victoriei (Victoria Square) to Casa Poporului (the House of the People). But he did not, because he died. Well, then Oprescu [Bucharest’s mayor] came... It’s called.... Ahmm... Uranus Boulevard. That’s it. The same name, the same project, the same style. Unbelievable! It is impossible to grasp that in 2011 Bucharest someone still does this... demolishes an entire neighborhood. An entire neighborhood!”

Pavel’s discourse is a personal rendition of the public arguments promoted by media and civil society in opposition to the project. The media portrayed Bucharest’s mayor as being Ceausescu’s successor, not because of any family or social connections to either the dictator or the communist party, but because of his actions and his role in the decision to demolish the Matache area. In newspapers and online forums, formulations like “Oprescu is for us Ceaușescu no. 2,” “He continues Ceaușescu’s demolition work,” or “Oprescu dreams of being Ceaușescu,” worked to establish a vivid equivalence between the present and the past. At different stages of the demolition project the citizens of Bucharest were reminded of the communist past. Beginning with the specter of tearing down this area to the demolitions themselves, and the desolating post-destruction landscape, Romanians mentally relived the traumas associated with it: displacement by eviction and the erasure of a valued historical past. Hala Matache and its neighborhood became “a place of enactment, a scene of instantiation” for the public memory of communism.⁷⁵ But rather than already being “emplaced”⁷⁶ (as it could be considered, for instance, in the case of Casa Poporului), people carried in the memory of communism and chose to attach it to this specific location.⁷⁷ More exactly, people took advantage of the authorities’ actions in regard to this place, re-called communism and thus created a new ensemble between the 19th century place, the present, and the memory

of communism.⁷⁸ In a way, the emplacement of the memory of communism is being done now, via this detour through the present. Casey reminds us that public memory needs stability of place⁷⁹, but here it is not the physical place that is stable. Rather, it is the topos of “just like during communism” that is constantly resurfacing in the process of dealing with and making sense of various occurrences in the present.

Maradona’s office was located on Calea Plevnei (Plevna’s Way). The street name is a reminder of the siege of Plevna, one of the major battles in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War. At Plevna, the Romanian army fought side by side with the Russians against the Ottoman Empire. The joint Russo-Romanian forces won the battle and thus decisively contributed to the Empire’s capitulation. Subsequently, Romania was recognized as an independent state.

In his email, Maradona’s directions read: “It’s a big apartment building, right on the corner, across from that humongous unfinished communist construction.” I knew exactly what he meant. He was alluding to Casa Radio (The Radio House), the building on the shores of Dîmbovița River, diagonally across from the Sanitary Heroes Monument. Erected in the late 80s, the building occupies a terrain inhabited before WW II by the Bucharest Hippodrome. Ceaușescu, who planned it as a museum for the Communist Party, witnessed the August 23rd National Day parade from its balcony in 1989.

Apparently, some refer to this building as “the younger sister of the House of the People.” At night, its ruins shelter homeless people; they also accomodate a number of urban legends involving, among other things, abandoned corpses of babies, a hopelessly in-love female student suicide, a fire, and satanic rituals.⁸⁰ Whether true or not,⁸¹ these stories continue to circulate amongst people, are from time to time dug up by the media, and provide the place with a negative aura. These stories also make of the decayed edifice a heteropia of deviation⁸²—moral, psychological, material, and religious deviation. The building is destined to become Dîmbovița Center, a shopping mall with one of the biggest indoor leisure centers in Europe, thus converting a space imbued with communist history into a capitalist/consumerist topoi. At the moment the project is being stalled by various legal and administrative issues. The “*humongous unfinished communist*

construction” is in a limbo: never accomplished as a communist edifice and yet to be accomplished as a capitalist venue.

„It Could also Come from Before”

Maradona’s NGO had also made a conversion: an apartment initially designed to be a private home was now converted into a workplace for about 24 people. Although it was rather crowded, the space appeared friendly and warm. As soon as Maradona opened the door to the office he shared with two other people and two turtles, I was able to see Casa Radio invading the window view. I could not refrain myself from thinking that he had to look at this building every single working day.

I started the conversation by asking him about the observation he made during the evening we met, when he expressed dissatisfaction with the state of “activism among young people.” In other words, he was complaining about the lack of civic involvement.

As he further unpacked this complaint, Maradona’s mentioned people’s “*very feeble appetite for protest*” as opposed to Romanians’ state of mind in the early 90s:

“There is no revolt. There is only disgust and nausea, but no revolt. It crushes me to see it, because, as you realize, I grew up in the 90s, I also lived through the revolution and... everything that happened after, all that craziness when people would go so very often out on the streets... And I have probably participated in dozens of protests, maybe more... ”

Trying to provide an explanation for people’s lack of interest in civic participation, he thought that communism has heavily contributed to “*an attitude of obedience.*” Explaining aspects of current life through past events is one of the key ways in which relations between present and past are forged. In these instances, the past accounts for the present.

In order to account for the present, the past has to be constructed in a certain way. People do not simply preserve the past; they reconstruct it on the basis of their most immediate presents.⁸³ It is important to note that “present” does not only name a set of particular historical, political, social, and cultural circumstances; it also names conditions that are intimately related to the everyday lives of individuals. Maradona works in a non-

governmental agency that advocates, as the official website states, for “transparent communication in the public’s interest.” As his job sensitizes him to issues of participation in the life of the city, he reconstructs the past by emphasizing an aspect of the present to which he is particularly attuned. In doing so, he selects autobiographical bits that are relevant for a larger history. His remembering of the 90s is his own, but not entirely his own, as many other people have participated in the University Square protests. Moreover, those events had significant echoes and ramifications through the subsequent decades; these ramifications were particularly important for the development of Romanian civil society and the production of a certain normative view on communism and its legacy.⁸⁴

On the other hand, Maradona also concedes to the possibility that Romanians’ obedience is a cultural/historic trait rather than a behavior that has been acquired and is exclusively connected to communism.

“I mean... probably communism had a big contribution to this... this attitude of obedience. But it could also come from before. It is possible that before was also rather... I mean, we do not have big... big protest movements, revolts.... in our history, that is.”

This “*it could also come from before*” is a moment of doubt, and, more importantly, a moment of self-reflection: maybe the present cannot be so neatly explained by the past, in spite of the temptation to do so. This moment of hesitation indicates a struggle over how to construct a discourse on the present. On one hand stands a tendency to construct the present (or at least some aspects of it) as originating in communism; on the other hand, there is awareness that these phenomena do not have a single origin. This looks like an attempt at genealogy,⁸⁵ as Maradona oscillates between communism and other possible alternatives of explaining the present. Searching for such an alternative

marks a desire to break with communism or, more precisely, with the idea that communism is determining the present. The alternative explanations offered are glimpses into forgetting or into possible remembering that are abandoned. What forgotten histories allow people in Romania to determine that the present gains its contours from the communist past? What else in the past could relate to, and influence, the present?

The fleeting fluctuation between affirming the communist past as an explanation for some aspects of the present and the willingness to find alternate pasts that could equally justify the current circumstances draws attention to an important question: what are the factors that exercise pressure on conceiving of the present as a clear and direct consequence of what happened during the communist past? Connerton posits, “We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present.”⁸⁶ In other words, in the process of inventing the present, we can choose from a variety of pasts. The communist past is many times chosen over other obtainable pasts for the reasons I mentioned in the previous section: its compelling recentness, its influential material persistence, the persuasive frequency of its appearance in media, political speech and cultural products, and the cogent unpredictability of its surfacing in people, objects, places, and activities.

“Everything Is Frozen in Time”

The door opened and a short female with glasses and a stack of papers in her hands entered. Upon seeing her, a half serious and half joking Maradona exclaims: “See, she reminds me of communism. My colleague...” She replied quickly, with a large smile, “Right, and I probably also remind you of the 1848 revolution...” After a good laugh, Maradona explains the serious aspect of his statement, “She worked at SIDEX⁸⁷ ... she worked there even before 89 for a little while. We call her ‘grandma’ ...”

Just like many other people, Maradona associates older persons with communism. “Old” and “old-fashioned” are symbolic associations that assist in the construction of negative meanings for communism. In this particular case, however, this person was also appreciated as someone who witnessed and could give testimony about one of the most important communist factories.

After ‘grandma’ leaves the room, he continues: “Oh, my dad’s workplace reminds me of communism too! He has worked in the same place ever since he graduated.”

Here, Maradona points to the continuities between the communist and post-communist eras; emphasizing continuity between “before” and “after” is yet another way of relating the past to the present. This particular example is a personal/individual continuity, which is not, however, unique. Although there were many economic transformations during the two post-communist decades, many people continue to have the same workplaces or to do the exact same work they did during communism.

But people also point to continuities that are evident in public life. One of my categories, *communism continued*, comprises instances in which people refer to (1) things, habits, and people that were in existence during communism and are still in existence today and (2) things that were started during communism and continued in the present. This way of relating past to present registers the absence of change and the persistence of certain communist projects or processes. The areas where people note continuities vary. Among them are material, legal, or relational continuities. Examples of material continuities include the ski lift at one mountain resort that one of my interviewees referred to as,

“That one! (his emphasis). Exactly that one [that was there during communism], they did not change anything.”

Maradona also provided an example of continuity as he noted in his neighborhood the building of two new subway stations, which started during communism and carried through after:

“They inaugurated a new subway station in my neighborhood. Actually, two stations... But the tunnel was dug during communism. They abandoned the work after the revolution and then they resumed it 5-6 years ago.”

In terms of legal continuities, one of my other interviewees, the researcher, would note that some communist laws are still in place today and offered very concrete examples, such as the law that establishes Romania’s administrative organization (issued in 1968) and the criminal code from 1969.⁸⁸

Another type of continuity people note is relational continuity, maintained as people remain connected in the same networks of personal and business-like relationships. As one interviewee put it,

“People knew each other; one can’t expect them to interrupt their relations just because they were in the party together... They will continue...[to keep in touch]”

Some of these examples of continuity might sound naïve, but they make better sense if read as an accumulation that culminates with the most important continuity expressed through the subcategory, “communists still run the country.” People mention and discuss the fact that Romania’s political and economic elites are former communist apparatchiks, former (simple) members of the communist party or their descendants. These elites’ relation to the former regime ultimately works to signify that “we are still a communist country” to the extent that, over the summer of 2012, I heard some protesters gathered in the University Square crying out,

“Down with communism!”

Over twenty years after the overthrow of the communist regime and the execution of Romania's communist dictator, some crowd⁸⁹ was chanting the same slogan that had been heard not only during the 1989 revolution, but also in June 1990, during the University Square protests.

The survival of communist elites has been a recurrent theme of discussion in academia, the media and everyday conversations after 1989; in fact, we can assume a mutual influence between these discursive areas as issues, arguments, and frameworks circulated between them. The media and academia accounted in their own specific ways the survival of communist elites while ordinary people directly experienced it in their lives—as employees, taxpayers, contractors of diverse services, and consumers of a variety of products. In his analysis of the origins of Romanian post-socialist entrepreneurs, Stoica has a moment of critical self-awareness when he writes, “many Romanians (among other Eastern Europeans) would laugh at my efforts to statistically demonstrate what most of them deem as commonsense knowledge, namely, the fact that the former party bosses are alive and, to the despair of many Romanians, well.”⁹⁰

While Stoica discussed the entry of former communist cadres into state bureaucracy, into the managerial echelons of state enterprises, and into the ranks of employers as creators of entrepreneurial activities, Grosescu investigated the political conversion of Romanian nomenklatura. According to her findings, in terms of numbers, the old elites represent a minority of the post-communist political class; as a matter of power, however, they are in positions that secure them a significant influence on present-day political life.⁹¹ The activities of such influential ex-communists are well covered by the media and become topics deliberated in everyday communicative exchanges.

The continuities of communism were also noted in more specialized areas of public life. Maradona, who is a soccer aficionado, described the way in which these continuities manifested in the soccer world. Specifically, he referred to material continuities, such as the soccer arenas:

“Almost all of them have remained from communism. Everything is frozen in time there; they only added wooden seats. But they are in such a poor state!”

Here the idea of communism’s continuity also integrated its association with the old and dilapidated. In addition, there are also continuities on the management level, which is a variation of the “communists run the country” story in a different region of the everyday.

“Very few things are changed in the soccer world. The power structures are the same... Well, there are other players, but the system is the same... The dominant teams are the same... Steaua and Dinamo, that is the privileged teams of the communist regime...”

As I well knew from my childhood, Steaua (“the star”) was the sport club created under the umbrella of the Romanian Army, while Dinamo was under the umbrella of the Romanian Police. As such, they had and still have better material support and also more prominence than other sport clubs.

The rhetorical significance of the “communism continued” theme is best understood if read alongside and in contrast to the fact that 1989 has been dubbed “the end” and “the death” of communism. “The end” of communism generated a rhetoric of transformation and subsequently the hope to achieve a “transition to democracy.” However, as Wolfe notes, the discourse of transition remains just a theory⁹² “which in the euphoria of 1989 received the force of fact.”⁹³

Concrete plans to ensure the disappearance of communism from public life accompanied the symbolic investment of 1989 as the year marking the end of communism. Throughout Eastern Europe—including in Romania—motions requesting the

purging of public life of the communist dignitaries were drafted and pushed onto the public agenda, with the hope that they will become laws. In Romania, however, these projects have repeatedly failed. The desire to cleanse the country from communists arose as early as in March 12, 1990, by a document known as Point 8 of the Timișoara Proclamation. The document asked that all former Romanian Communist Party nomenklatura, as well as secret police officers, be banned from running for public office for three consecutive election cycles,⁹⁴ a point further supported in the University Square protests in June 1990. In spite of these efforts, no legal provisions were adopted to this effect. Furthermore, from 1990 to 1996, and then again from 2000 to 2004, the office of the Romanian presidency was awarded by popular vote to Ion Iliescu, who occupied significant leadership positions in the Romanian Communist Party before 1989. Subsequent efforts to have a lustration law—i.e., a law restricting the accession to political power and public offices of the acolytes of the communist regime—have failed for more than two decades⁹⁵, but the issue was on the public agenda during all this time. A lustration law was finally passed only in 2012. The theme of ”continuity of communism” thus registers these failures and the disappointment that in spite of being so pompously and enthusiastically announced, the end of communism has not yet come. The revolution, as Mark put it, is unfinished.⁹⁶

Maradona’s interest in soccer puts him in a position from which he is able to talk about the continuity of communism in an area of life that is not necessarily equally visible to all participants in Romanian culture. This continuity, however, is a variation of a more public and pervasive discourse about the continuity of communism in key power structures. As discussed earlier, his job alerts him to the lack of civic participation, thus

pushing him toward linking this particular aspect of the present with the communist past. In order to do it, he weaves in his own experience of historically relevant moments. Furthermore, his movements through the city put him in direct, routine contact with materialities that stimulate him to reflect and make sense of the relations between present and past. I only offered two examples in this analysis: the location of his office exposed him daily to Casa Radio, one of the many material traces of communism; and the geographical position of his home enabled him to take notice of the continuation of the subway project.

The family doctor

”They Were like Two Drops of Water”

I met Ștefania after the third and last representation of “X mm from Y km...,” In the first part of her intervention in the after-performance conversation, Ștefania told the story of her mother’s inability to purchase all the necessary ingredients for a home-made pizza. It was an all-too-familiar story about the shortage of food in the communist markets.

Ștefania’s story elicited much-needed smiles after a long and dry tirade of a well-known university professor dissatisfied with the accuracy of communism’s representation in the performance. He was determined to persuade the audience that the persons depicted in the performance, whom he had met and closely known, were very different from their embodiments on the stage.

The second part of Ștefania’s intervention raised my interest, especially when she claimed that some of our fears represented our inheritance from our parents who had lived through communism.

As with the others, I approached her after the organizers thanked the audience for participation thus concluding the evening. I identified myself as a researcher, explained the gist of my work, and asked her to grant me an interview. As with the others, I asked her for an email address where to send the IRB documents. Although it took a while for her to respond, because of her complicated and unpredictable schedule (she works in shifts), Ștefania sent me a telegraphic email:

“Between 12 and 13:00⁹⁷ at Verona. This Thursday, the 21st.”

Café Verona, the place where she wanted to meet, was a trendy place on a little street in downtown Bucharest, right off Magheru Boulevard. Magheru is one of the main boulevards in the city, connecting University Square to Romană Square. As the street sign read, the name commemorated Gheorghe Magheru, “general and politician, one of the leaders of the Romanian 1848 Revolution.”

The name of the street, chosen by the communists in 1948, represents yet another continuity that I think remains more subtle and less known. One of the transformations in the post 1989 society was to change quickly street names honoring communist dignitaries, such as Alexandru Moghioroș (Romanian communist), Ho Chi Minh (Vietnamese communist revolutionary), or moments in communist history, such as March 6th (in honor of March, 6, 1945, the date of the first communist government headed by Petru Groza), December 30th (to celebrate December 30th, 1947, the day when Romania's king was forced to abdicate and Romania became the People's Republic). However, even as Gheorghe Magheru had nothing to do with the history of communism proper, the name of this street was nonetheless established by the communist regime, along with the names of approximately 149 other streets.⁹⁸ Boia argues that "the revolution of 1848 provided the supreme myth of history rewritten by the communists." The communists regarded the protagonists of the revolution as the perfect „symbol of the absolute revolutionary ideals.”⁹⁹

This example shows the problematic, ambiguous connection between historical memory and practices of commemoration, as it is uncertain whether people know that communists positioned the memory of the general Magheru in the heart of the capital city. The street name is also an example of the ways in which the memory of communism is still, inadvertently, present in the toponymy of the city, despite the major changes accomplished during the twenty years after the revolution. Seemingly innocuous, the Magheru Boulevard still carries with it the way communists saw Romanian history.

It was a very hot day, so I decided to take a cab although I knew I should expect heavy traffic at that hour. The cab driver made a brief remark about the high

temperature, and the even more overwhelming humidity, which he followed by saying, with a sigh:

"I can't wait for my vacation, so I can go to the seaside."

"Yes, I know what you mean," I replied.

He continued with an avalanche of un-elicited information, culminating with a personal story that led us both back to communism.

"Well, I have such good memories of my times spent in my youth by the seaside. I used to work at Radio Vacanța.¹⁰⁰ Once, during my time there, I even shook Ilie Ceaușescu's hand. I froze when I saw him. But then he told me, 'calm down, lad!'" The driver laughed while looking at me out of the corner of his eye. I guess he wanted to see if I had enough background knowledge to understand the story. I did. It was quite common knowledge in Romania that Ilie, Nicolae Ceaușescu's younger brother, looked as if he was the dictator's twin. So I joined him in laughter to acknowledge that I was aware of this fact. He wanted to make sure that I understood the magnitude of the resemblance, and insisted, "They were like two drops of water."

By the time he finished the story, we were on Magheru at the intersection with Verona Street, named in honor of the Romanian painter Arthur Verona. I thanked him for the ride, paid, and got out of the car while feeling as if I was getting into a sauna. I was looking forward to finding some shade in the garden-like outdoor space of the café.

"Don't Talk to Anybody about Your Personal Stuff"

*As I entered, the images of two Elena Ceaușescu and Tudor Postelnicu, greeted me. Movie posters featuring their portraits hung from an iron fence to my right. First I came upon Elena's picture, in a golden frame, on a communist red-colored background. The tag line, in white letters, read: "Elena Ceaușescu would have banned this movie. Two lovers talk about chemistry in an inappropriate context." To understand the innuendo, one had to know that Elena Ceaușescu was Nicolae Ceaușescu's malicious wife, that she had concocted for herself a scientific career in chemistry, and that she had inspired fear by continuously reprimanding people. The title of the movie, *Visul lui Adalbert (Adalbert's Dream)* was written in yellow on the bottom of the poster. A second tagline under the title parodied the communist wooden language while offering details about movie: "A comedy of considerable democratic concentration. May 4, in theatres all over the country." By Elena's side, as if looking at her, Tudor Postelnicu's picture appeared in a darker frame; again, the background was a communist red. The white tag line said, "Tudor Postelnicu, the secret police chief, would have banned this movie. At some point, one can hear 'Go, Steaua!'" To understand the innuendo, one had to know the story of the rivalry between Steaua, the team sponsored by the Romanian Army, and Dinamo, the team sponsored by the secret police.*

I had seen before another poster for the same movie with Ceaușescu's picture on it. It was the first day of my 3 month-long ethnographic immersion. I was on my way to Cora, a hypermarket across the street from my parents' house, where I lodged. During my childhood, a communist milk factory stood on the grounds of the Belgian store Cora. The factory survived for a while after '89 but it went bankrupt after having been privatized in the early 2000s. The building was eventually demolished. Many of Bucharest's malls and supermarkets rise today on the grounds of former communist

factories. By Cora's east entrance, a screen was incessantly rolling commercials. I was surprised to see Ceaușescu's picture right after a bottle of sparkling water. Intrigued, I read the caption that said "Ceaușescu would have banned this movie. Everybody in the movie can say, 'river, reindeer, and ray'." To appreciate the poster, one had to know about Ceausescu's speech particularity. He used to roll his r's. I made sure to keep in mind the title of the movie, "Adalbert's Dream." But because I wanted to take a photo, I waited for the poster to come up again. I waited through an advertisement for a crafts fair. My camera was ready. Then I patiently watched the ad for the mineral water again. My right pointer finger was tense on the camera button. When Ceaușescu finally reappeared, I pressed the button. At the exact same moment, I heard multiple voices saying in unison,

"Long live Ceausescu!"

As I looked up from the camera, I saw the three young men whose voices I had just heard. I wondered whether they had reacted to the sight of Ceaușesu's image or to me, taking the picture. They walked away with a vibrant, somewhat wicked laughter.

At home, my computer and the website cinemagia.ro (a Romanian version of imdb.com) disclosed a little more about the movie. The movie site explained the story line as follows: "The film is a black comedy based on a real event that took place in a Romanian communist factory in the 80s. While the sub-engineer responsible with work safety is busy trying new angles for a documentary presenting protective gear, one of the factory workers has an accident unrelated to his work. The man's hand is cut off by the broaching machine while he was making knives to sell for personal profit."

This prior encounter with Adalbert's Dream movie and its intriguing posters came to my mind as I walked slowly toward the fence opposite the entrance. The place was not as crowded as I had seen it be during the evening. I actually had the luxury of choosing between three tables that were in the shade of old, large-crowned trees. I tried to pick the coolest spot.

When she arrived, Stefania apologized for being late, and told me that she did not feel very well and had taken the day off from work. I felt guilty that she still came even though she was ill, so I proposed that we reschedule. However, she insisted that the conversation would take her mind off her sickness. So we proceeded.

I reminded her of the discussion after the performance, when I initially met and recruited her. At that time, I heard her saying that there were certain fears that we inherited from communism or, more exactly, from our parents who had lived through communism. As a psychiatrist in training, Ștefania was attuned to the issue of trans generational trauma. She thought of her behaviors and anxieties as being "learned from and transmitted by her parents." For her, one of these learned behaviors was related to what she called "the family secret" or, "Don't talk to anybody about your personal stuff."

"The family secret is... I don't know if it's necessarily rooted in communism, but it is for sure rooted in the Romanian social collective. I mean... 'You always wash your dirty laundry in the family...' This stuff is well represented in our society... From the fact that I used to have lice when I was 4 years old and... 'Don't tell anybody that you have the lice!' Which is... At 4 everybody has lice!"

Her observation calls for a different way of thinking of collective memory. Before

honing in on commemorative practices, memorials, and museums, historians were interested in the problematic of memory under the umbrella of inquiries into collective mentalities.¹⁰¹ Confino argues that the field of collective memory studies almost forgot this part of the tradition and asks us to remember it.¹⁰² He believes that re-calling the issue of mentality would help collective memory to “outline the mental horizons of society as a whole, to link elite and popular culture, state indoctrination and habits of mind, within a single cultural world.”¹⁰³

Some scholars have already made attempts to discuss the communist past in terms of how its mentalities have survived in the present. Mihăilescu argues that the communist regime “left deep imprints” on people, moulding “characters, attitudes and mentalities.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, he identifies ten “mental stereotypes” that result from the long and deep exposure to communist propaganda and to the communist way of life. Among the stereotypes, he counts apathy toward political activity, support for the paternalism of the state (the idea that the state should provide extensive economic support),¹⁰⁵ great confidence in official informational sources, and distrust of the market economy.¹⁰⁶

Betea is also a supporter of the idea that post-communist collective mentalities could be considered “remanences” of communist propaganda and its effects.¹⁰⁷ From this perspective, she investigates the lasting impact of communism on the meaning of World War II, nationalism, and language; the long-term effects of the anti-abortion law from 1966; the idea of “revolutionary”; and Ceaușescu’s trial as the “last stalinist trial in Europe.”

The idea of studying the impact of communist ideology on the collective

mentalities is valid and contributes to a more profound understanding of the memory of communism than research focused on discrete memorializing practices of communism. However, as Ștefania's example shows, the effects of communism on mentalities are not always directly and obviously linked to propaganda.

Ștefania was not alone in noticing this idea of secret, but she framed it in terms familiar to her own professional language. The way Vaniousha, another interviewee, framed this idea, renders more clear the fact that mentalities congealed during communism are not related exclusively to the ideological assault of the regime. During our interview, Vaniousha talked about the suspicion he identified in the current behavior of his fellow Romanians:

“To me, suspicion seems a consequence of the terror instituted by... Well... I think it was already there when I was born. That thing... not to talk about the regime with strangers or even with your friends, because one never knows. It was a direct consequence of the surveillance system, ahmm... the system of informers who, depending on who you were they were paying more or less attention to what you were saying, and then they made reports. And I am assuming that there were numerous cases of... I mean... clearly, intellectuals, but also ordinary people who remained unknown... you know... in history... who disappeared or had to suffer because of this. And so the most intelligent thing to do was to hold your tongue and not to trust anyone. But once the revolution came and the object of this distrust had been lost, I think that the behavior persisted. That is, suspicion as a mode of self-protection...But at the same time.... Losing the representation of the other because of isolation and the lack of contact for such a long time determined a certain kind of social relations between people. The fact, for instance, that Romanians in diaspora do not help each other.... It seems to me that this fact is very related to this thing, you know? While any other nation, you know? We have a sort of discomfort, an embarrassment.... Noooo.... We do not easily get close to people anymore. And it seems to me that this is a consequence of this sort of relation that was instituted back then. ”

Apart from those influenced by propaganda, there are also behaviors and mentalities formed as mechanisms of survival during communism. Ștefania's “family secret” and Vaniousha's “culture of suspicion” serve as examples of such behaviors. In addition, one could assume that some mentalities and habits related to the everyday life

under communism persist in the present. In fact, Ștefania herself offered an example when she mentioned, laughing:

“My parents still have this reflex... they always buy bread to take to the country, even though in the village the bakery is around the corner...” I understood the allusion, although my grandparents had not lived in the country. Bread was scarce in the rural areas and it was an unwritten rule that anybody from the city heading to a village would take bread with them.

Olick and Robbins would call this type of mnemonic persistence “inertial,” i.e., “a particular past occurs when we reproduce a version of the past by sheer force of habit.”¹⁰⁸ “Inertial” connotes apathy and “force of habit” hints at the fact that we are somehow dominated by habits; we are their slaves. These are also the meanings generally attached to habits by my interviewees, because this particular view supports the idea of continuity. But habits can be, as Felski notes, “intentionally cultivated.”¹⁰⁹ More importantly, as enactments, habits are contingent: they are re-signified every time by their context and they are responses to a context. Or, as Burawoy and Verdery note, “action employs symbols and words that are not created de novo but develop using the forms already known, even if with new senses and to new ends.”¹¹⁰ Consequently, habits acquire rhetorical salience. In addition, the notion of “habit” draws attention to the fact that the past and its remembering is not entirely and not always exteriorized, visible, touchable, and graspable in representations; it is oftentimes an integral part of our bodies and of our everyday activities. Attending to habits’ recurrence in the structure of the everyday offers the possibility of contouring the study of public memory with what Connerton called “a rhetoric of re-enactment,”¹¹¹ an idea that I will revisit in the next chapter.

“Does It Come from Communism or Where Does It Come from?”

Beyond the conceptual usefulness of “mentality” for exploring “how memory structures behavior and thought,”¹¹² the notions of reminiscent behavior and reminiscent mentality are important for the ways in which yet another type of relation between past and present is rhetorically framed as continuity. As a matter of rhetorical practice, to locate the past in habit and mentality is to locate the continuity of communism in the organic body proper, thus reinforcing the “aliveness” of communism in the present. With “communists run the country,” the communist past is incorporated in official public bodies—in the body politic. But habit and mentality, as my examples show, can be inscribed in any/body, including ordinary people. Communist habit and mentality can be identified in family members or in someone we pass by on the street. As opposed to public and official bodies that have, in a certain sense, a more fixed location, the everyday people, their habits, and their nearly infinite trajectories of possible movement distribute the continuity of communism potentially anywhere. It is not everywhere, but it could surface anywhere. From this perspective, we can consider the unpredictability or even the randomness of remembering. Zelizer notes that memories are illogical and that they “pop up where they are least expected.”¹¹³ Her examples, however, point to memory’s unpredictability mostly connected to political memory—to the self-conscious use of the past in the service of political agendas of the present.¹¹⁴ To this, we should add unpredictability (and/or randomness) as a feature of everyday life. The unpredictability of remembering is not only about not knowing which part of the past will be invoked in the present, but also about which part or region of the present and which of the present’s occurrences offer opportunities for recalling the past.

While she told the story about lice, I heard a mix of outrage and amusement in Ștefania's voice. But as she continued, she became grave and concerned. "And then family matters that you are not allowed to discuss and again, this was a very big issue... There is a.... In my opinion, this message creates a very big blockage in psychotherapy in Romania."

Taking a sip from her pink lemonade she expressed her thoughts slowly and passionately:

"It's very difficult for a psychotherapist to offer a secure frame, you know? And so you think: ok, does it come from communism or where does it come from? Ahm... A Romanian psychotherapist has a hard time creating a safe space in such an environment. And so I would approach this, for instance, as a legacy, let's say, of communism... the fact that it is very difficult to create a safe frame in the psychiatric practice."

Although both share the concern, Ștefania and Vaniousha have very different ways of framing the mentality of "don't talk.". Their different renderings show how remembering communism through the idea of mentality is modulated in the interaction with their specific professional training and the concerns that derive from it. In addition, Ștefania's professional field informs her concerns for the present, and offers her the specific way to bridge it with the past. From the everydayness of social relationships where she, along with Vaniousha, had initially located this "mentality," Ștefania moves it into the private, secret, confidential space of psychiatric practice. But even there, mentality does not remain hidden; it is rendered visible as a shared concern specific to the community of psychiatrists. She frames the link between present and past as an obstacle to the practice of her professional community. In a similar manner, in the related field of psychology, Stephens locates mentalities owed to the communist past in both therapists and their clients and argues that the practice of psychology today is determined by ways of thinking acquired during communism.¹¹⁵ Remembering communism as a survival of mentalities is thus "professionalized." In other words, it is produced and reconstructed in expert language for expert communities.

This episode suggests that certain forms of remembering and ways of rhetorically

embedding the past into the present spill into or rather circulate through very diverse cultural areas. Thus the rhetorical force of certain modalities of remembering comes from their distribution across and movement through multiple life domains; it comes from their concerted activity in all these areas. It might be useful then to think of rememberings, as well as their rhetorics, in terms of “ecology.”¹¹⁶ Edbauer defines rhetorical ecologies as “co-ordinating processes, moving across and within shared structures of feeling.”¹¹⁷ The circulation of the various modalities of relating the present to the past across and within various contexts is most probably enabled by a certain shared structure of feeling that makes it valid and appealing in multiple locations.

The next chapters continue to examine how certain remembering practices—practices that sustain the past in the present and practices by which people pursue the communist past—move in and between multiple locations and spheres of life. By relating the present to the communist past, people account their present—at least some aspects of it—as a world defined in particular ways by the communist era. To a certain extent, the ways in which people relate the present to the past conveys a certain way of seeing their present. By comparing the present to the past, by explaining the present in terms of the past, and by defining identities via the communist past, people *see* the past as a presence in their everyday existence. In the next section, I attend to the ways in which people *make* the past a presence, through activities that maintain the awareness of the communist past in their daily life.

Notes

¹ Zelizer, for instance, notes that collective memory studies consider memory “as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing, and transforming,” and yet she doubts that the field sufficiently and comprehensively addressed “the centrality of process in our discussions of memory.” Zelizer, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," 219-20.

² Aristotle, "De Memoria Et Reminescentia," in *Theories of Memory. A Reader*, ed. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 9.

³ Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present.*, ed. Jonathan Crewe Mieke Bal, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), x.

⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1. Huyssen is not alone in discussing the ways that the contemporary era tries to cope with at least some of its issues via memory and engagement with the past. See, for example, Jeffrey K Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From " Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of sociology* (1998): 115-16.; Nora's analysis of *lieux de memoire* coupled with his regret for the disappearance of *milieu de memoire* participates in the same line of argument: for various reasons, including the speed of life and new technologies, we go through paradigmatic changes to which we respond with a memory craze.

⁵ Stormer, "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mnesis," 27.

⁶ We could add to this the fact that neuroscience teaches us that there is no real difference between “brain processes operative in remembering and perceiving.” That is to say that at a biological level, there is no difference between the past and the present. See Brockmeier, "After the Archive: Remapping Memory," 20.

⁷ Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From " Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," 128. See also the extensive discussion provided in Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 67-74.

⁸ John Bodnar, *Remaking America. Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁹ George H. Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (London: Open Court, 1932), 30.

¹⁰ George Herbert Mead, "The Nature of the Past," in *Essays in Honor of John Dewey*, ed. John Coss (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1929), 241.

¹¹ John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995), 6.

¹² See, for instance, Barry Schwartz, "Iconography and Collective Memory: Lincoln's Image in the American Mind," *The Sociological Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1991).; "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington," *American Sociological Review* (1991); Barry Schwartz, Yael Zerubavel, and Bernice M Barnett, "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory," *The Sociological Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1986).

¹³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A Coser (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 49. See also Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, vol. 1 (London: Verso Books, 1994), xxiii.

¹⁴ Schultz and Reyes, for instance, argue that public memory should be "understood as the mobilization of the past for present needs" and proceed to demonstrate how this mobilization is accomplished through rhetorical means; most specifically they perform a close textual analysis. David P Schulz and G Mitchell Reyes, "Ward Churchill and the Politics of Public Memory," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 4 (2008).

¹⁵ Stephen H Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's Plymouth Rock Oration," *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 57, no. 4 (1993): 464.

¹⁶ Blair, "Introduction," 13.

¹⁷ Roseann M Mandziuk, "Commemorating Sojourner Truth: Negotiating the Politics of Race and Gender in the Spaces of Public Memory," *Western Journal of Communication* 67, no. 3 (2003): 288.

¹⁸ Marouf Hasian Jr and Robert E Frank, "Rhetoric, History, and Collective Memory: Decoding the Goldhagen Debates," *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 63, no. 1 (1999): 102.

¹⁹ Carole Blair, Marsha S Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr, "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 3 (1991). In this case, invention comprises the choice of postmodern over modern architecture.

²⁰ See Lloyd F Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25(1992).

²¹ Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," 7.

²² Barbara A Biesecker, "Remembering World War Ii: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *ibid.* 88, no. 4 (2002): 406.

²³ Rosalyn Collings Eves, "A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women's Cookbooks," *Rhetoric Review* 24, no. 3 (2005).

- ²⁴ Brockmeier, "After the Archive: Remapping Memory," 12.
- ²⁵ Andrei and Mihalea Pelteacu Lakatos, "Reconversie Funcțională Și Regenerare Urbană. Muzeul Național De Artă Contemporană, Autor: Arh. Adrian Spirescu," *Arhitext*, no. 10 (2008), http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=11565#_Andrei_Lakatos__Mihaela_Pelteacu_Reconversie_func_ional___i_regenerare_urban_...
- ²⁶ Light and Young offer the following details: "[it] covers an area of 6.3ha with a frontal elevation 276m wide and 86m high. It comprises 23 stories, numerous grand ceremonial rooms on the entrance level and space for 700 offices." See Duncan and Craig Young Light, "Urban Space, Political Identity and the Unwanted Legacies of State Socialism: Bucharest's Problematic Centru Civic in the Post-Socialist Era," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 4 (2013): 520.
- ²⁷ Germany, for instance, demolished its Palace of the Republic, despite opposition from the population. See Uta Staiger, "Cities, Citizenship, Contested Cultures: Berlin's Palace of the Republic and the Politics of the Public Sphere," *Cultural Geographies* 16, no. 3 (2009).
- ²⁸ Maria de Betania Uchoa Cavalcanti, "Urban Reconstruction and Autocratic Regimes: Ceaușescu's Bucharest in Its Historic Context," *Planning perspectives* 12(1997): 90-91.
- ²⁹ One of the controversies, for instance, involves the architectural plans for reconfiguring the landscape around Casa Poporului; the debate started almost 20 years ago, following the launching of an open competition for architects. See Light, "Urban Space, Political Identity and the Unwanted Legacies of State Socialism: Bucharest's Problematic Centru Civic in the Post-Socialist Era."
- ³⁰ Stan and Turcescu offer details of the controversy. The location of the cathedral is meant to suggest a central place for Orthodoxy "in the heart and mind of the nation." For the civil society, in turn, the cathedral is waste of resources and, more importantly, "a shameful rewriting of the recent past aimed at recasting the Orthodox Church from a supporter to a critic of the communist regime." Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratisation," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 8 (2000): 1121.
- ³¹ John Kozy, "The Argumentative Use of Rhetorical Figures," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 3, no. 3 (1970): 145.
- ³² See Sam Glucksberg and Boaz Keysar, "Understanding Metaphorical Comparisons: Beyond Similarity," *Psychological review* 97, no. 1 (1990): 15.
- ³³ Amos Tversky, "Features of Similarity," *ibid.* 84, no. 4 (1977): 328.

³⁴ Tversky argues that people “tend to select the more salient stimulus, or the prototype, as a referent, and the less salient stimulus, or the variant, as a subject.” Ibid.

³⁵ In Connerton’s view, “it is that in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all.” Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6. Similarly, Zelizer suggests that the past is used as a familiar territory where collective memory searches and finds meaning for the present. Barbie Zelizer, “The Past in Our Present: The Assassinations of Yitzhak Rabin and John F. Kennedy,” in *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, ed. Yoram Per (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 282.

³⁶ Jeffrey K Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,” *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999): 335.

³⁷ Dana Otilia Farcasanu, “Population Perception on Corruption, Informal Payments and Introduction of Co-Payments in the Public Health System in Romania,” *Management* 14, no. 1 (2010).

³⁸ Florina Spânu, Adriana Băban, Mara Bria, Dan L. Dumitrascu, “What Happens to Health Professionals When the Ill Patient Is the Health Care System? Understanding the Experience of Practising Medicine in the Romanian Socio-Cultural Context,” *British Journal of Health Psychology* (2012): 671.

³⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984), 8.

⁴⁰ Blair, “Introduction,” 13.

⁴¹ McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” 279.

⁴² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

⁴³ Cloud denounces McGee for overestimating “the capacity of audiences to make texts of their own from the fragments that bombard them, when, indeed, the fragments of culture often come together in stable ideological patterns and preferred meanings” Dana L Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 58, no. 3 (1994): 151 This is certainly a point that is worth retaining, by carefully examining particular instances of rhetoric and its reception; conversely, however, it is worth wondering if the focus on the ideological production of public memories does not in its turn overestimate their capacity to stay intact in their encounter with audiences.

⁴⁴ James V Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5-7.

⁴⁵ McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse."

⁴⁶ Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," 391.

⁴⁷ Blair, "Introduction," 15-16.

⁴⁸ Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci also talk about "the sensation of fear provoked by this place." Cristea, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," 299.

⁴⁹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 86.

⁵⁰ For instance, in the 1990s, one of the most prominent Romanian publishing houses started a book series titled "The trial of communism" and many of these memoirs are published within this framework, as testimonies. More importantly, the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania cites the body of memoirs from the communist prisons in support for the official condemnation of communism. See Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste în România, Raport Final, http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf. 308-19.

⁵¹ This frame is suggested, among others, by the incorporation of "victims" in the name of the museum, the exhibits focusing on repression, destruction, deaths, and the aspiration to seek justice evidenced in the arrangements, discourses, and activities of the museum.

⁵² Simina Bădică, "National Museums in Romania," in *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference Proceedings from Eunamus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, ed. Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius (Bologna: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011), 728.

⁵³ Cristea, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," 303.

⁵⁴ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*.

⁵⁶ Olick and Robbins give an account of Halbwach's distinction between autobiographical memory and historical memory and between historical memory that can be organic or dead. Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From" Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," 111.

⁵⁷ Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁹ Petrescu, "Mastering Vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography," 369. See also Livezeanu, *The Poverty of Post-Communist Contemporary History in Romania*.

⁶⁰ Wim Van Meurs, "Romanian History-Writing and the Third Envelope," *Romanian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2003): 22.

⁶¹ Cioroianu, "Les Avatars D'une «Nation Ex-Communiste»-Un Regard Sur L'historiographie Roumaine Récente."

⁶² See "The Official Website of the Romanian Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile," http://www.iiccr.ro/ro/proiecte/proiecte_educationale/elevi/manual_curs_optional/.

⁶³ For a description of the media and political discourses around the report, see Hogeia, "Coming to Terms with the Communist Past in Romania: An Analysis of the Political and Media Discourse Concerning the Tismaneanu Report."

⁶⁴ Among others, see King, "Remembering Romanian Communism; Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Șiulea, Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, *Iluzia Comunismului: Lecturi Critice Ale Raportului Tismăneanu [the Illusion of Anticommunism: Critical Readings of Tismăneanu Report]* (Chișinău: Editura Cartier, 2008); Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues."

⁶⁵ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, 20-21.

⁶⁶ Brummett speaks argues that we move "through a world of discontinuous and chaotic signs, a mélange of bits," and from these we construct a "mosaic of meaning." Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*.

⁶⁷ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, 2.

⁶⁸ Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," 334.

⁶⁹ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 52.

⁷⁰ Nora argues that "memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstruction. Its new vocation is to record: delegating to the *lieu de memoire* the responsibility of remembering." Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 13.

⁷¹ Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci note the scarcity of permanent exhibitions on the communist past in Romania; in Bucharest there is only one, in the Romanian Peasant Museum. A notable absence is noted at the National Museum of History, where there is nothing that speaks to Romania's recent history. See Cristea, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments." Lucian Boia writes, "A walk through the rooms of the Museum of National History in Bucharest illustrates the extent of resistance to change. Despite the years that have passed, everything looks just as it did before 1989." Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 229. For several years now, there have been discussions regarding the construction of a museum of communism in Bucharest. A museum of communism in Romania's capital city was one of the recommendations of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship. On July 18 2011, the online edition of the Romanian newspaper *România Liberă* published an interview with Vladimir Tismăneanu who was at the time the president of the scientific council of the Romanian Institute for the Investigation of the Communist Past. In the interview, Tismăneanu offered some details about the location and the exhibits of the planned museum. However, on April 23, the online edition of the newspaper *Adevărul* reported that the lower house of the Romanian parliament rejected a law project regarding the establishment of the museum. Outside of Bucharest, 700 km away to the north, the Sighet Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance was for almost two decades the only place dedicated to the memory of the communist past. Most recently, the work of transforming the former communist prison from Râmnicu Sărat is in progress.

⁷² Sungmin Lee, Verónica C Ramenzoni and Peter Holme, "Emergence of Collective Memories," *Plos ONE* 5, no. 9 (2010): 1.

⁷³ Francesca Cappelletto, "Long-Term Memory of Extreme Events: From Autobiography to History," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 2 (2003): 242.

⁷⁴ Ger Duijzings, "Dictators, Dogs, and Survival in a Post-Totalitarian City," in *Urban Constellations*, ed. Matthew Gandy (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2011), 148.

⁷⁵ Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 38.

⁷⁶ Much of the scholarship on remembering treats memory as being "emplaced," strongly attached to certain places (especially museums and memorials). See, for instance, Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places."

⁷⁷ Oftentimes scholars assume memory as the "occupant" of certain places, and thus the agent or the active factor in the relationship between memory and place. In this way, the role that people play in establishing and maintaining connections between certain memories and certain places is forgone.

⁷⁸ De Certeau writes about “implanting” a memory in an already formed ensemble: “In short, what constitutes the *implantation of memory in a place* that already forms an ensemble? This implantation is neither localized nor determined by memory-knowledge. The occasion is taken advantage of, not created. It is furnished by the conjuncture, that is, by *external* circumstances in which a sharp eye can see the new and favorable ensemble they will constitute, given *one more detail*. A supplementary stroke, and it will be ‘right.’” Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 86.

⁷⁹ Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” 39.

⁸⁰ online edition Adevărul, “Misterele Bucurestiului. Casa Radio: Din Muzeul Al Lui Ceaușescu, La Sinucideri Și Ritualuri Satanice [Bucharest Misteries. Radio House: From Ceaușescu's Museum to Suicides and Satanic Rituals],” October 9, 2010.

⁸¹ Zelizer aptly writes that “memory’s congruence with the events that it represents becomes secondary to the larger issues of making sense of the public’s relationship with those representations.” Zelizer, “Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” 229.

⁸² Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 25.

⁸³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

⁸⁴ As Brotea and Beland write, the University Square protests in the 90s attempted “to liquidate Romania’s communist legacy.” For a comprehensive analysis of the long-term consequences of the University Square phenomenon, see Julia Brotea and Daniel Beland, “‘Better Dead Than Communist!’: Contentious Politics, Identity Formation, and the University Square Phenomenon in Romania,” *Pavilion*, no. 15 (2010).

⁸⁵ Stormer discusses this kind of awareness as being the “task of a genealogist.” Stormer, “Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mnesis,” 29. However, I also locate it in the consciousness of people in the process of producing explanations encompassing the historical past.

⁸⁶ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 2.

⁸⁷ Galati Steel Works (Combinatul Siderurgic Galati), the largest Romanian Steel Factory, a symbol of the success of industrialization during the communist era.

⁸⁸ While this is true, the code from 1969 was, however, modified several times after 1989. A new criminal code entered in effect in February 2014.

⁸⁹ I witnessed this episode during a commemoration of the University Square protests from June 1990. “Some crowd” refers to the fact that the commemoration was a disputed event, as several groups of people with several agendas were present.

⁹⁰ By “well,” the author means active in different spheres of the public life. Stoica, "From Good Communists to Even Better Capitalists? Entrepreneurial Pathways in Post-Socialist Romania," 262.

⁹¹ Grosescu, *Les Communistes Dans L'apres-Communisme. Trajectoires De Conversion Politique De La Nomenklatura Apres 1989*, 319-20.

⁹² Academic theories of transition are themselves modalities of connecting the present to the past. See Burawoy and Verdery for a comprehensive review of transition theories. Among other things, the two authors note that transition is conceived either as discontinuity or continuity. Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, "Introduction," in *Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, ed. Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 4-7.

⁹³ Thomas C. Wolfe, "Cultures and Communities in the Anthropology of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," *Annual review of anthropology* (2000): 198.

⁹⁴ David Kilgour, "Proclamația De La Timișoara Și Societatea Deschisă În România Post-Totalitară [the Timișoara Proclamation and the Open Society in Post-Totalitarian Romania]," *Seria științe juridice* 23.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Grosescu, "The Role of Civil Society in the Romanian Transitional Justice Failure."

⁹⁶ James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ Romanians prefer the use of military time.

⁹⁸ Duncan Light, Ion Nicolae, and Bogdan Suditu, "Toponymy and the Communist City: Street Names in Bucharest, 1948–; 1965," *GeoJournal* 56, no. 2 (2002).

⁹⁹ Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 215-16.

¹⁰⁰ Radio Vacanța (Vacation Radio) was a popular radio station broadcasting through large speakers on all Romanian beaches during communism . As the online edition of the newspaper Evenimentul Zilei [The Day's Event] reports in a piece published on July 25, 2010, the station was a propaganda instrument especially targeting the foreign tourists at the Black Sea. The signature “You are listening to Radio Vacanța” and the song that identified the station ever since its beginnings in 1967 can still be heard on the Romanian littoral today.

¹⁰¹ Hutton traces historians' interest in memory to the work of French historians who were investigating collective mentalities since the 60s. Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 1-10.

¹⁰² Confino, "Memory and the History of Mentalities," 79.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁴ Ioan Mihăilescu, "Mental Stereotypes in the First Years of Post-Totalitarian Romania," *Government and opposition* 28, no. 3 (1993): 316.

¹⁰⁵ Kideckel makes a similar argument when he discusses the issue of paternalism in contemporary Romanian politics. Most specifically, he contends that Ceaușescu's paternalism persists, albeit modified, in the present. David A. Kideckel, "The Undead: Nicolae Ceaușescu and Paternalist Politics in Romanian Society and Culture," in *Death of the Father. An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority*, ed. John Borneman (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ Mihăilescu, "Mental Stereotypes in the First Years of Post-Totalitarian Romania," 317-22.

¹⁰⁷ Lavinia Betea, *Mentalitati Si Remanente Comuniste [Communist Mentalities and Remanences]* (Bucuresti: Nemira, 2005), 30.

¹⁰⁸ Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From " Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," 129.

¹⁰⁹ Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life," 26.

¹¹⁰ Burawoy and Verdery, "Introduction," 2.

¹¹¹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 65.

¹¹² Confino, "Memory and the History of Mentalities," 81.

¹¹³ Zelizer, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," 221.

¹¹⁴ For instance, she illustrates by Bush's invocation of World War II in connection to the invasion of Iraq; about the way in which Elizabeth Glazer and Kimberly Bergalis have determined new turns for the collective memories of AIDS; and about leaving out Russians from commemorations of D-Day. Ibid.

¹¹⁵ In particular, he narrates the reluctance of both psychologists and clients to use phenomenological therapies; in his view, this reluctance is a consequence of communist propaganda's insistence on the fact that a person is externally determined. Michael J Stevens, "Professional Psychology after Communism: The Case of Romania," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 29, no. 3 (1998).

¹¹⁶ Edbauer proposes the notion of "rhetorical ecology" as "a circulating ecology of effects, enactments, and events." See Jenny Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public

Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35(2005): 9. Dickerson, inspired by media studies, suggests the term "memory ecology" as "a collection of representations that together create the texture of memory and influence society's attitudes toward the past." Dickerson's formulation is useful as it specifically addresses the domain of memory and instead of focusing on a single discrete representation, considers a multiplicity, possibly the totality, of representations relevant for a specific memory. See Jacob Alan Dickerson, "Framing Infamy: Media and Collective Memory of the Attack on Pearl Harbor," (PhD diss., North Carolina State University, 2012). I prefer Edbauer's emphasis on movement and circulation, and the resonance of this view of rhetorical ecology with the idea of both memory and rhetoric as processes.

¹¹⁷ Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," 20.

SUSTAINING THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

“...for nearly all our originality comes from
the stamp that time impresses upon our sensibility.”

Baudelaire

“The past we know about is not, in any case,
a present that was ever experienced.”

Lowenthal

Introduction

For Pierre Nora, *lieux de mémoire* are characteristic of the “acceleration of history” in modern times. They mark the disintegration of a supposedly closer, more natural relationship to memory, expressed in the idea of *milieux de mémoire*, a mode of remembering typical of primitive civilizations. According to Nora, pre-modern societies were able “to live within memory” and “each gesture, down to the most everyday, would be experienced as the ritual repetition of a timeless practice in a primordial identification of act and meaning.”¹ In contrast to these earlier times when memory was integral to daily activities, modern societies compartmentalized the experience of remembering² by crafting discrete places (museums, memorials, monuments, cemeteries) and time intervals (commemorations, national days) that stood apart, separated from the flow of everyday life. While memory in the archaic societies was “unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing,” modern societies were characterized by “the appearance of the trace, of mediation, of distance” which resulted in the “conquest and eradication of memory by history.”³ The work of sustaining the past in the present, once effortless, internal, and lived, became labored, external, and mediated.

As a historian, Nora was invested in the relationships between memory and history. More specifically he attempts to historicize memory, to scrutinize it as a “historically evolving entity.”⁴ For Nora, the evolution of memory as it traverses the

historical ages is a cognitive transformation from *milieux* to *lieux de mémoire*, from living memory to constructing memory. Furthermore, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* allows Nora to recast history as “merely” another form of memory and to deploy a critical program that pays attention to the ideological underpinnings of the signifying practices involved in memorialization.⁵

There are at least three problems with this account. First, as Kansteiner cautions, Nora’s account is “as Eurocentric as it is simple and seemingly compelling.”⁶ In other words, Nora’s vision of modernity is circumscribed by the series of industrialization and social modernization processes registered by Western-European—and especially French—history.⁷ On one hand, Nora’s reliance on Western modernity complicates and unsettles analytical accounts of *lieux de mémoire* in Eastern Europe,⁸ because Eastern Europe’s relationship with modernity is itself complicated and unsettled.⁹ On the other hand, the influence and circulation of Nora’s discourse on places of memory and, more generally, of the type of historical consciousness that his project typifies, can be understood as an effect of modernity’s global reach.¹⁰ In Eastern Europe’s case, Nora’s theorization can be productively tackled precisely by considering the complexities and the tensions inherent in the region’s relationship with modernity. Second, Nora’s narrative emphasizes “the dark side of modernity,” portraying a “disenchanted world,”¹¹ separated from customs, rituals, and traditions, in which individuals feel alienated from their past as a consequence of having historicized memory.¹² His account could be balanced by examining the ways in which modernity enables new forms of connection and new attachments to the past. The recent communist past in Eastern Europe might provide opportunities for discovering moments in which people continue to enact memory in the

social rituals of everyday life. Third, Nora's account radicalizes memory as an activity that is evacuated from people's everyday practices and exclusively entrusted to self-conscious, purposeful memorializing activities. Nora's radical view on memory leaves little space for the "micro-worlds" of remembering practices and for the cumulative potential of the "small" acts and activities of remembering to create *milieux de mémoire*.

The critical program that gained force with Nora's conceptualization of *lieux de mémoire* loses sight of what people do on their way to establishing coherent and relatively stable topoi of memory. Furthermore, this research agenda also misses "the emergence and transformation of collective memories that do not aspire to the iconic authority so often denoted by civic monuments or memorials."¹³ In addition, a focus on readily recognizable *lieux de mémoire* forgets not only that remembering is sometimes spontaneous (an understanding somewhat denied by Nora's perspective on memory in modern times), but also that, as Zelizer argues, "memory appears to vibrate in excess of our ability to anchor it in discourses."¹⁴

Rhetorical scholars embraced "places of memory" as a concept that expands mnemonic practices beyond discursive/textual accomplishments.¹⁵ Gradually, rhetorical scholarship is moving toward a more complex understanding of memory places that recognizes the multiplicity of rhetorics, rhetorical practices and rhetorical arrangements that are deployed in such spaces. There are at least three overlapping and interrelated research agendas that promote this more complex view of the places of remembering. First, rhetorical scholars are more and more interested in rhetoric's (and memory's) materiality. As physical places of memory, museums, monuments, and memorials are especially opportune places for tackling issues of both rhetoric's and memory's

materiality.¹⁶ Second, there is an increasing sense that a memory place is better understood as an interaction of discourses, rather than an isolated, bounded “text” that can be read separately from the environment in which it exists.¹⁷ Third, there is a growing interest in visitors’ interaction with the places of memory that promotes not only an understanding of places of memory as interactive and dialogic spaces¹⁸ but also a more careful consideration of the actual consequentiality of these memory places for their publics.¹⁹

The insight developed as a result of these three interrelated concerns allows for an account of remembering as a complex and dynamic process. However, the majority of this work remains focused on acts of remembering as prompted and promoted by self-conscious memory sites. Rhetorical scholarship in public memory frequently overlooks such questions as: How do people circulate and rework memories acquired in these places? How do individuals’ everyday exchanges affect the constitution and reconstitution of these sites? And, more importantly, what are the remembering practices that are developed outside and alongside these iconic places? What is the significance of discourses, events, objects and practices that, without being obviously commemorative or memorializing, are still consequential for memory? What does memory or remembering look like when we consider it not as an activity consigned to intentional discourses, events, objects and practices as Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* would suggest, but instead as an environment where both iconic and non-iconic forms of memory circulate and influence each other?

My work on the memory of communism in Romania engages these issues and questions. The second theme that emerged from my analysis is especially illustrative for

some of the tensions that come with thinking about memory as compartmentalized and as bound to particular places. The theme, *sustaining the past in the present* catalogues practices, discourses, objects, and performances that work together to maintain an awareness of the communist past. However, the categories that coalesced in this theme do not show a clear separation between self-conscious and spontaneous memory practices. In the flow of everyday life, this compartmentalization is less pronounced.

Sheringham argued, “cultural memory, personal memory, and the everyday are linked in a dynamic continuum that has nothing to do with official commemoration or institutions, but with moments in the flow of everyday.” Although his expulsion of official commemoration is extreme and likely inaccurate, Sheringham’s observation is extremely valuable. Cultural memory, personal memory and everyday life are experienced together as a flow, or as a composite,²⁰ which amounts to something more and different than the sum of the elements participating in its constitution.

In my first chapter I attempted to describe some of the subtle processes of circulation, mutual influence, integration or convergence that engage both rhetorical practices associated with dedicated places of memory alongside more routine everyday practices. Among others, I shared the example of Claudia, the student who integrated the experience of the Sighet memorial into an individual school project that she subsequently shared in the public space of her classroom. In addition, I also discussed how discourses and practices circulate through a multiplicity of life domains. For instance, I presented evidence for the ways in which the discourses on the continuity of communism are distributed and (re)shaped in academic, journalistic, professional, and everyday

environments. I concluded the chapter by suggesting that it might be useful to think of remembering and the rhetorical processes that shape remembering in terms of “ecology.”

The theme of “sustaining the past in the present” is best understood as a collection of practices, events, objects, and discourses that circulate and work together across diverse areas of life to maintain the memory of communism in the present, thus participating in a rhetorical ecology of remembering. “Sustaining” is not about persistence over long periods of time,²¹ but about activities in the present that maintain and perpetuate the memory of communism in the present. One of my early memos noted: “In addition to people relating the present to the past, there are also numerous practices that keep communism alive in people’s minds.” While “relating the present to the past” is about constructing relationships with the communist past, “sustaining” is about supporting the circulation of the communist past in the present via integrative operations. That is, the conceptual categories subsumed under this theme describe how an awareness of the communist past is maintained into the present. There are seven categories subsumed under “sustaining the past in the present”: preserving communist objects, invoking nostalgia, fancying the past in the present, rehearsing communism, using communism for cultural production, communismspeak, and conversing about communism. These categories depict discourses, objects, events, and practices that work together to integrate the communist past into activities, concerns, or visions of the present.

By keeping possession of objects from the past, saving them, or collecting them, people retain the past in their current life. While invoking nostalgia, individuals make themselves and their conversation partners aware of the ways in which they engage the

past. By fancying the past in the present, people try to envision ways in which some aspects of the past have room in or can be integrated into the present. With rehearsing communism the past is re-actualized in gestures and events. The use of communism for cultural productions makes the past available for cultural consumption and circulation and thus elicits further discussion. Communismspeak reveals how the past is built-in language²² and, finally, conversing about communism describes how the past makes an appearance in everyday exchanges.

Conceptual Categories

As Sturken notes, “the shift in cultural studies from an interest in the objects of culture to the practices of culture was a deliberate move toward a focus on individuals’ and groups’ negotiation with the meaning of cultural forms and activities.”²³ The categories described below speak to this interest in practices rather than in objects; they register what people *do* rather than being concerned with representations of memories that reside in objects or places; and they focus on how these practices dynamically interact with other practices, objects, and events. Preserving communist objects, invoking nostalgia, and fancying the past in the present are ways to sustain the past in the present by integrating the communist period within a certain logical existential need for the past in the present.

Preserving the Past

Preserving the past registers instances when people mention acts by which they hold on to material leftovers (usually objects) from communism. These acts and the circumstances of their occurrence are not exclusively private, as my examples will show. The exemplars in my data vary along the effort involved in holding on to the past, from

simply “keeping” to “salvaging,” “searching,” and “collecting.” On the effort scale, to keep a communist object is the easiest, as it simply involves not throwing it out or giving it away. “*I still have my pioneer scarf and my pins. I don’t want to give them away,*” one interviewee shared.

In Romania, the red pioneer scarf has become the symbol of a past life that is currently being reinvigorated in music, fashion, and political activism. The Pioneer Organization was the communist political formation comprised of youth between 8 and 14 years old.²⁴ Hence the pioneer is the reminder of childhood under communism. The figure of the pioneer and the symbols associated with it are disseminated in ways that touch multiple senses, activate various signifying conventions, and reach diverse intensities on the private-public spectrum. Personal photographs and narratives of a former pioneer life are shared in virtual communities and on blogs; pioneer songs and images are cited in music videos; and pioneer pins and scarves are available to touch, gaze upon, or purchase in antique fairs and souvenirs stores. Pioneers and their world are also incorporated into various textual genres such as history books, comic books, and pop-up books. The pioneer becomes a *motif* revived in commercials, temporary exhibits, or news features, within frameworks of consumption, education, and entertainment. The red scarf is in this context a material and easily portable insignia of life as a child during communism. Musicians display it on the cover of their albums and TV personalities parade it in photo sessions for magazine features. “*Hipsters wear the pioneer scarf,*” I have been told by one of my interviewees, thus suggesting that the red scarf rimmed by the Romanian flag colors is fashionable as a sign of unconventional attitude. During my trip, I have encountered the scarf in a souvenirs store in downtown Bucharest next to

Romanian flags, magnets with the Parliament House, and cups imprinted with Vlad Țepeș' (Vlad the Impaler) image, thus being included in a symbolic repertoire of keepsakes from Romania. In addition, various social and political campaigners flash the red scarf in political actions. For example, during my visit in the summer of 2012, the Romanian artists and intellectuals took to the streets to protest against the abusive dismissal of the Romanian Cultural Institute leadership. The supporters decided to put on a bow tie in support of the Institute's president, Horia Roman Patapievici, who always wears such a necktie. One of the protesters appeared with a red pioneer scarf, thus enacting a sort of symbolic resistance to the "bow tie" theme. He later explained to me why:

"First, the protest had to be for the Institute, not for Patapievici as an individual. Second, I can't identify with a bow tie. But I can identify with the pioneer scarf. In addition, it provided a colorful variation. And... I had used the scarf in political actions several times before. For instance, in December 2008, we went to the Romanian Parliament Assembly when the new government was formed... We had some messages that were related to the scarf, something along the lines of 'Do you want us in line, just like the pioneers? But we are rebellious citizens.' 'Do you want us to be exemplary pioneers?' Or something along these lines... We wanted to convey this idea of [not] being in line, of [not] simply accepting of what they offered..."

In this complex and rather cluttered rhetorical milieu, in which the scarf undulates between fashion object, souvenir, identity symbol, and political sign, the reasons for holding on to one's personal pioneer scarf are multiple and varied. On one hand, the scarf is a marker of autobiographical memory. Keeping it contributes to a more extensive

activity by which saving and arranging objects in one's house facilitates the process of life review.²⁵ On the other hand, the pioneer scarf is also retained as a proof of participating in history, in a certain historical era. There is a certain pride and privilege associated with having lived through communism. As Maradona shared during our interview, *"I feel privileged for having lived through communism and that I lived through this change. I really think that I have an advantage for having lived through communism. It helps me better understand the present."* In addition, autobiographical memory is not simply individual memory. As Wang and Brockmeier demonstrate, autobiographical remembering is a cultural practice, inflected by the specific culture in which it emerges²⁶ and, subsequently, by rhetorical practices. Keeping the pioneer scarf is both prompted and framed by the larger cultural and political milieu that construct it as a rhetorically salient object involved in a variety of discourses and practices.

As reflections of a higher level of engagement with preserving the past, "searching" and "salvaging" are both more active and more effortful. Salvaging means preventing the throwing away of an object. One of my interviewees recounted the recovery of a carpet from the office of one of Bucharest's districts: *"After they kept it for years in the mayor's office, they wanted to throw this carpet away. It's from '67, when it was made for Ceaușescu. My husband brought it home and our cats love it! I was thinking about selling it..."* The salvaging prolonged a "simple" keeping.

"Searching," however, involves even more effort. While making a movie about former communist factories and brands, a director and the people he was interviewing searched for a particular pair of sneakers. He described the search as follows: *"We made an almost archeological effort to find the last Drăgășani sneaker. We wanted the one, the*

original. Gigi talked to the factory guard, and the guard allowed him inside the building. When he came out he was holding a sack full of sneakers.” Drăgășani was the name of both the city and of the factory in which these famous sneakers were produced during the communist period. Their fame, in fact, came from the fact that Drăgășani was the only Romanian brand of sneakers. The sequence described in the interview above became public in the documentary *Metrobranding: A Love Story between Men and Objects*,²⁷ which depicts a journey attempting to find the leftovers of Romanian ”monobrand.” Romania used to produce one brand per object, or so the story of the documentary goes: the Relaxa mattress, the Drăgășani sneakers, the Pegas bicycle, the Mobra motorcycle, the Fieni light bulb, and the Ileana sewing machine.

Although nostalgia might be involved in the practices described above, I opted for distinguishing the ways in which people include themselves in discourses about nostalgia and nostalgic practices. In her work on Eastern Germany, Berdahl shows that labeling certain practices as “’mere’ nostalgia” functions as a political discourse aimed at legitimating and reinforcing “the socially sanctioned commemorative practices.”²⁸

Invoking Nostalgia

Invoking nostalgia for communism comprises instances in which people conspicuously adopt a position on their own nostalgia and nostalgic practices. Todorova notes that in Eastern Europe, nostalgia is castigated as a part of a larger effort to impose certain normativities on the way communism is remembered. Todorova describes this normativity as “the obsession over *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*,” a German term with a rich signification, as it subsumes “reassessment, coming to terms with the past, coping, dealing with it, but also includes redress, even retribution...”²⁹ In a broader sense, the

mere labeling of practices or opinions as “nostalgic” is ideologically charged, raising questions “about whose memories count, what kind of attachments and modes of life are valuable, and what kinds of harms are politically relevant.”³⁰ By making a point of declaring or rejecting nostalgia, participants in the culture conjure up their affective relations (or lack thereof) with the communist past, as well as their position on or engagement with the normative discourses on remembering communism.

Even though nostalgia is interwoven with some of the other practices discussed here, an aspect that I will approach throughout my subsequent analysis, this category recorded only those instances in which people are clearly affirming their mode of engagement with nostalgia. I tried to avoid labeling certain practices and instances as nostalgic, because nostalgia is only one of the nuances involved in some of the activities of remembering.

As I suggested above, nostalgia varies in terms of its acceptance as a valid emotion. In my data, nostalgia is either affirmed or rejected. For instance, one of my interviewees confessed,

“I remember with fondness... I remember the childhood... ‘cause there are all these marks of the period, the fish on the TV... the Gallee vases, and the crystal glasses from... I can’t remember now where they used to make them... the carpet... the Persian. The lacquered furniture made at Tirgoviște (laughs).”³¹

Similarly, Maradona disclosed his preference for Pepsi, the only Western brand of soda available on the market during communism, as a sign of nostalgia:

“Yes, I clearly have nostalgia. Well, first of all, I always prefer Pepsi to Coca-Cola. And then, when I go shopping, I search for foods that remind me of

communism, I always buy those [instead of others].” Here, communism is remembered, as I also mentioned in the first chapter, in connection to childhood – and although my interviewee talks about foods that remind him of communism,” he refers to foods that remind him of the childhood that cannot be disentangled from the communist past.

Other interlocutors, however, wanted to be very clear about the absence of nostalgia as a drive for their actions. A designer who collected material objects from former communist factories stated:

“I don’t have any nostalgia for that period, that’s not the reason I salvaged them [the factory paraphernalia] ... “

Given the pressure of normative discourses on remembering communism, it is difficult not to consider that accepting whole-heartedly one’s own nostalgia or categorically rejecting it are two attitudes already in relation to the larger state-sanctioned discourses about the memory of communism. While accepting could be read as a rebellion against this normativity, rejecting nostalgia might be interpreted as conformity with dominant discourses. However, these two positions actually respond to two realms of discourse that have a differential treatment for nostalgia. Bonnett argues that while “in the realm of cultural practices, of personal pleasures” nostalgia is “ubiquitous and explicit,” “within the realm of political rhetoric, of intellectual activity, nostalgia is routinely vilified.”³² The affirmation of private/cultural nostalgia does not simply rebel against the normative dictums that do not allow this type of attitude in the public spaces. Nostalgia can also be understood as a rebellion “against the politicization of life, against the idea that things are only of value if we place them in a political ideology.”³³

On one hand, the acceptance of nostalgia almost always responds to deeply felt existential needs and to an understanding of communism as the time of childhood. Boym writes that nostalgia is “a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.”³⁴ It is this yearning that people accept without qualms. Public displays of nostalgia, however, are rejected with moral rage, because nostalgia stands in the way of progress. Moreover, a discourse on Eastern Europe’s nostalgia is supported and maintained by Western Europe as a way of constructing an East that lags behind.³⁵ But differentiating between communism as a political regime and communism as the time of growing up is a difficult task, as many of my interviewees confessed. For instance,

“They [childhood and communism] are extremely mixed up... For me it is very difficult to distinguish between them... For me there are only pleasant memories and I can’t... no matter how horrified I am of what was actually happening [during communism], that period of time was actually normal and pleasant for me.”

To a certain extent, from the individual’s point of view, repudiating communism would amount to repudiating his/her own life. But the gap between the previously separated realms of nostalgia—the personal/cultural and the public/political—is increasingly closing. As Davis anticipated in 1979, in its global career “nostalgia” has started to signify, “*any* sort of positive feeling toward *anything* past, no matter how remote or historical.”³⁶

Fancying the Past in the Present

Fancying the communist past in the present comprises expressions of a desire for things past to make a return in the present or expressions of satisfaction that some things

from the past are not entirely gone. This concept conveys the idea that certain features of the past are kept in mind as viable, desirable alternatives for the present. A positive feeling toward the past underlies the examples of this category. For instance,

“I like this idea of the pioneer, and pioneer scarf. And if I could... not that I would impose... But I would give children the possibility to identify with a certain... with a certain style, a certain symbolism – in terms of clothing, that is.”

Such instances seem even more “radically” nostalgic than “preserving communist objects,” as they appear to express the desire to restore³⁷ a lost practice or, to a certain extent, to restore the past. Lowenthal writes, “nostalgia is not so much being uprooted as having to live in an alien present.”³⁸ Thus, the desire to (re)integrate elements of the old order into the now is an attempt to (re)make the present day familiar. But the idea of a return of the past can also be seen as a critique of the present and of the normativities of memory. The sanctioned discourses on the memory of communism require purging the present of the past and condemning the totalitarian regime. Fancying some elements of the communist past in the present opposes the rejection *in toto* of the past as required by official discourses. Instances like the one described above imagine the present and the future in a co-habitation with the past. “Fancying” is a play of imagination that re-casts, re-constitutes, re-configures elements of the old world into the new one. This is, in Boym’s terms, a reflective nostalgia that “does not follow a single plot, but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones.”³⁹ But fancying the past in the present is not just reflexivity. Attempting to find a place for the communist past in the present is nostalgia’s “moment of creativity, of discord, and anger.”⁴⁰ Nostalgia becomes the chance to imagine and reconfigure a vilified, condemned,

purgeable past into a workable present, against the imperatives of normative memory, and animated by the irritation that previous forms of attachment have been too easily forgotten.

Connerton contends that the everyday “as a structure of exemplary recurrences,” creates a “rhetoric of re-enactments” than a has “at least three distinguishable modes of articulation” which he calls “calendrical, verbal, and gestural re-enactments.”⁴¹ The calendrical dimension refers to the repetitive rhythm of communal celebrations; the verbal dimension indicates the repetition of sacred, ceremonial words; and the gestural dimension designates ritual movements.⁴² The categories in the subsequent section resonate with Connerton’s notions of re-enactments. However, Connerton’s theorization is founded on a link to rituals and sacred ceremonies, which I use, in the cases that I present, as a heuristic rather than a literal association.

Rehearsing the Past

Rehearsing the communist past comprises instances in which people reenact or describe instances in which certain aspects of communism are rehearsed or reenacted by others. This category refers mostly to bodily reenactments, actions that engage bodily memory in ways that have various degrees of self-consciousness. The exemplars in this category differ in their magnitude, as they range from small gestures to more elaborate stagings. While recounting her attendance at a music concert where she happened upon one of her old friends, Lucia, one of my interviewees offered this small gesture as an example:

“There were many people there. I even met a former colleague of mine. ‘How are you, girl? Is this the only way we can meet?’ You know... and then I made a joke... ‘Pay

attention, look into my eyes: for the party's glory and for the socialist Romania's prosperity... Înainte! (Forward!)" And she answered, raising her right palm to the forehead: 'Tot înainte!' (*Always forward!*)" My interviewee re-enacted and then invited, jokingly, her friend to re-enact the pioneer salute, a gesture very similar to the military salute. Her friend's bodily memory reacted immediately in response. While she told the story, Lucia demonstrated the salute and signaled with her hands that she wanted me to join her in the ritualistic gesture. Like her friend's body, my arm reiterated the salute with precision, bringing forward a motion I was not aware I still carried with me. The episode recounted by Lucia took place by the entrance of a concert hall before an exquisite music concert that was itself a re-enactment of communism. The event, titled *Salut Voios de Pionier* [Joyful pioneer salute], after one of the best-known pioneer songs, presented a generous selection of pioneer tunes. A choir of children dressed in full pioneer uniform—white shirt, dark blue skirts for girls and dark blue pants for boys, belts, red scarves, and white berets—performed communist propaganda music for an audience that, according to this and other interviewees, was enthusiastically singing along.

The Romanian pioneer salute is a historically-politically-culturally specific practice. It is both a verbal and a gestural re-enactment of a tradition incorporated into bodily memory. The pioneer music concert, then, offered an occasion for its re-surfacing that is in Casey's terms, a "performative remembering," for which "no specific recollection is necessary."⁴³ However, this bodily memory has no "proper" place in the new post-communist world; the concert thus constituted the opportune moment, the *kairos*, that allowed this mnemonic re-enactment in a world where this habit is otherwise anachronistic. Once a significant part of highly scripted ceremonials, the pioneer salute,

deeply buried in—but not forgotten by—the body, seized this serendipitous occasion to re-appear in the present world. Its re-appearance recalls the codified disciplining rituals commanded by the communist regime and the diligence with which they have been incorporated.

Lucia also offered a description of a “communist bash,” which is a more elaborate re-enactment of communism. The staging requires more preparation, props, costumes, and re-hearsing of texts. Her account, however, is secondhand, as she did not directly participate in the party. She became privy to some details after one of her co-workers was involved in such an event:

“They had placards from kitchen towels... paper towels... and everybody prepared a little poem.... With what they remembered... They each prepared a little poem, but for the parts that they forgot.... they improvised with lyrics... almost pornographic lyrics.”

The exemplars subsumed under “rehearsing communism” also vary in terms of openness or publicness. Some of them are open to the large public; others, like the party described above, are accessible only to a relatively small number of people. One other interviewee, who also had knowledge of events such as the gathering depicted above, referred to them as parties *cu circuit închis*, which translates as “closed circuit.” In other words, such parties are organized by and accessible only to a limited number of people.⁴⁴ However, communist parties have also become popular in clubs and bars across the country on certain holidays, especially May 1 (Workers’ Day) and August 23 (the National Day during communism), thus re-enacting the communist mnemonic calendar.

Another example of a more accessible re-enactment is a book presentation staged in a public space:

“They launched the book at Casa Universitarilor [The Academics’ House] terrace because it was exactly like the old restaurant de protocol [privileged restaurants, usually for party elites; these eating places were better provisioned than ordinary restaurants] and they had a menu just like in the old times. Crepes, Pepsi, white wine carafes...

The pioneer salute, the communist-themed parties, and the book launching are restored behaviors. Restored behaviors or “twice-behaved behaviors” are “physical or verbal actions that are not-for-the-first time,” they are prepared or rehearsed.⁴⁵ Schechner explains that restored behavior situates the individual performing it “‘out there,’ separate from” him/herself. It is “‘me behaving as if I were someone else,’ or ‘as I am told to do’ or ‘as I have learned.’”⁴⁶ On one hand, these re-enactments or restorations of the past in performances allow the participants in the culture to live, for brief moments, within memory—as in Nora’s account of *milieux de mémoire*. Re-enactments of such habits fictitiously⁴⁷ restore a temporal continuity with the communist period. In Romania and almost everywhere else in Eastern Europe, these kinds of practices (along with others) are labeled as “nostalgia” and “treated as a malady.”⁴⁸ However, these re-enactments are not political restorations, but rather ontological ones. People who rehearse behaviors that were routine in their everyday lives during communism recuperate a sense of their past identity – in the case of the pioneer salute, their past as children and teenagers. As Felski notes, routines “may strengthen, comfort, and provide meaning,”⁴⁹ offering reassurance and familiarity to those who perform them. On the other hand, re-enacting the old habits

in the here and now constitutes a contrastive gesture that allows for and stimulates reflection on both the past and the present. Brought into *now*, the past, once “natural” and “taken-for-granted,” becomes “the other” of the present. But because it is brought back through the body, the past is not as separate from the individual, as it is, for instance, in the objects of museums.

A special sub-category of “rehearsing communism” is “using communism for cultural production,” which designates the instances in which people talk about the ways in which communism or a certain “communist aesthetic” is used for making art.

Using the Past for Cultural Production

Using communism for cultural production has two primary versions with varying degrees of overlap. First, there is art *about* communism, which relies on the use of historical memory including stories and documents. The “X mm from Y km” performance, for instance, is an example of art about communism because it uses a document from the secret police archive. I will elaborate on this example later in this chapter. The movie “Adalbert’s Dream,” with its storyline based on a real-life event is yet another example. The film’s posters, which I kept encountering throughout the city, re-enforced this connection with the historical memory by featuring historical characters of the communist era. Creating cultural products using stories and histories from the communist past participates in maintaining an awareness of the past in the present; these practices and the resulting cultural products also supply stimuli and topics that sustain conversations about the communist past.

Second, there is also art *with* communism, that is, art that uses a “communist” aesthetic or form. For instance, one of my interviewees reported, “*They re-published*

Jules Verne's works, in the same format as in the 80s...” A clearer and richer example is Atelier Mecanic [Mechanical Workshop], a bar in the old center of Bucharest that uses a communist industrial aesthetic. I will describe this example in detail in one of the subsequent sections of this chapter. The practice of creating cultural products that use a “communist” aesthetic (or, in any case, an aesthetic reminiscent of the communist era) supports the perpetuation of forms and styles recalling the communist period.

In addition to these more physical re-enactments, there are also re-enactments at the language level. The next conceptual categories, communismspeak, communist toponymy, and conversing about communism are such verbal re-enactments.

Communismspeak

Communismspeak labels the instances when language reminiscent of communism is used. Communismspeak includes two subcategories: using “*limba de lemn*” (wooden language)⁵⁰ and communist toponymy.

“The Wooden Language”

Using *limba de lemn* (“the wooden language”) comprises occasions when people report or use a “communist style” and when they cite communist jargon. This category varies in its earnestness. For some people, the wooden language is taken seriously, in other words, is an integral part of their everyday-life personae and in their daily communication they are taken in by their own speaking.⁵¹ One of my interviewees described the serious use of communist language as follows: “*there is a style of speaking... a style of speaking that does not say anything, without any substance... filled with promises and innuendos, but nothing specific.*” Betea, for instance, describes in detail a number of “wooden language” characteristics that have persisted in post-

communist political discourses. She identifies six such remnant aspects: loquacity, redundancy, avoidance of terms prohibited during communism, foregrounding nationalism, virulence, pathetic inflections, and also a series of formal elements (syntactical and morphological habits).⁵² As a political and cultural practice that is ingrained in the body much like re-enactments, this type of speaking combines, as Connerton would put it, cognitive memory and habit-memory.⁵³ This manner of speaking reveals that “discourse does not stay in touch with the past strictly through practices that are framed, in effect, with ‘I remember.’”⁵⁴ Discourse can also stay in touch with the past by rehearsing old habits of speaking.

In contrast, others use this style of speaking ironically or playfully. Unlike the earnest use of wooden language, which is a rather unself-conscious practice, ironic uses of communist language are acutely aware of their own performance. I witnessed an example of ironic use of communist language during the “plagiarism scandal.” In the summer of 2012, the Romanian media accused Victor Ponta, the new Romanian Prime Minister, of plagiarism.⁵⁵ Ponta’s integrity was under heavy fire and people took to the street, calling for his resignation. In these protests, one of the protesters’ boards read: “*Copy, copy, copy!*” The protesters were ironically citing a Lenin line that was very well known to Romanians. The original “Learn, learn, and learn!” was part of the repertoire of Lenin quotes that was often repeated during communism in official speeches, in textbooks, and on schools’ walls. While parodying Lenin, the sign also referenced Ponta’s “communist schooling,” as some political and media discourses promoted the idea that Ponta was former communist President Ion Iliescu’s⁵⁶ protégé and apprentice. The media circulation of photographs of Ponta in pioneer uniform further amplified

views of the Prime Minister as a continuator of communism. The invocation of Lenin in reference to Ponta thus echoed multiple discourses from the Romanian public sphere.

Communist Toponymy

Along with the communist style of speaking, the practice of using former communist names for geographical locations also contributes to a re-enactment of the past through language. *Communist toponymy* refers to the use of the former communist designations for urban places. For some people, using the former communist names of places is a habit they cannot shake. Maradona, for instance, while trying to describe for me a hotel in Bucharest, asked: “*you know where Flora Hotel is?*” Interrupting himself, he continued with, “*Ah! This is another thing... all the time... I use the old names of the hotels and everything else... People say ‘Howard Johnson’. Which one is that, Howard Johnson? I know Bucharest Hotel, Dorobanți Hotel...*” Other people, however, are very self-conscious about the names they choose to use. When I asked why he kept referring to the Parliament’s House as Casa Poporului (The House of the People), Pavel, one of the students I interviewed, stated: “*Well, because this is what it is, the House of the People! They try to hide behind the ‘Parliament’s Palace’... No, it is the House of the People and that is what it should be called.*” Pavel insisted upon the political significance of both the past and current name of the building, hinting to the “lie” performed by the communist regime—the House of the People was destined not to the people but to the political dignitaries—and implying that in the practice of current political representation—by calling it the Parliament Palace—we pretend to have forgotten what the House originally represented.

Conversing about Communism

While using a communist speaking style and using communist terms for urban places are habitual activities embedded in the practice of language, communism also makes its appearances on the surface of speech, as a topic of conversation. Conversing about communism refers to instances that explain and describe how conversations about communism occur. Two subcategories are subsumed here: “communism as a topic of conversation” and “taking the past for granted”

Communism as a topic of conversation

Communism as a topic of conversation refers to instances that describe how people arrive at communism as a topic of conversation. Sometimes the connection between the “running” topic of conversation and the “jump” to the communist past is somewhat reasonable or foreseeable, as in the following example: *“I think we [my friends and I] were recently talking about the irrigation system. I say, ‘Look! This is criminal! That regime left in place an irrigation system. Where is it?’”* On other occasions, however, a conversation can quite unexpectedly bring forth a memory of communism. For instance, I recorded the following experience in my observations:

At some point, we [my friends and I] talked about the recipe for caprese salad. Because busuioc was one of the listed ingredients, I wondered out loud what the English term is. After one of my friends said ‘basil,’ another one said rather unexpectedly: “I remember Cenuclul Flacăra [The Flame Literary Circle] ... they once had a song that said Pacea trebuie tradusă în americano-rusă [the peace should be translated in American-Russian].”

Taking the Past for Granted

However, memories are not always stated explicitly during conversations. Sometimes they constitute the backdrop against which sense-making processes proceed. Thus, “taking the past for granted” registers moments when the participants in a conversation assume that their partners have the background knowledge on communism that allows them to understand what is being said. On July 5, 2012 one of my observation notes recorded the following episode:

“My friend Irina phoned me today, but the call dropped after ‘Hello’. When she called back I told her I did not know what happened. She replied: ‘Ponta [the current Romanian Prime Minister] is monitoring us.’ She made an allusion to the times when the secret police monitored people’s calls and she knew I would get the innuendo.”

According to Hopper, taken-for-granted communication comprises “messages not actualized in physical speech, but nevertheless ordinarily understood in-common by the senders and receivers of the talk.”⁵⁷ In lay terms, the taken-for-granted is what is spoken and understood between the lines. My friend takes for granted that I have the background knowledge to make the connection with the communist past; she also takes for granted that I can regard as plausible the fact that Ponta could be listening to our call. In rhetorical theory, the taken-for-granted is to some extent equivalent to the enthymeme. According to Bitzer, the enthymeme is an incomplete syllogism because the speaker leaves some premises of argument unspoken and “lets his audience supply them out of its stock of opinion and knowledge.”⁵⁸ Irina’s premise for the joke, that I had to supply, was that things did not change. In other words, it is business as usual, business just like during

communism. In this particular case, I had to contribute a premise from my stock of opinion and knowledge as a participant in Romanian culture, history, and memory.

Although the aforementioned conversation was private, this type of situation is relevant for the broader public space in two ways. First, the background knowledge necessary to understand the innuendo is not an individual possession, but is shared by the larger culture. Irina's joke did not invoke any intimate understanding that we shared as friends. The joke hailed me as a member of the culture with whom Irina shares both historical time and historical memory. Second, these types of innuendos are distributed in more public forums, as revealed in the example of the protesters' sign. In addition, as I witnessed from my observation of virtual communities (Facebook, forums, blogs, comments section of websites), such innuendos and jokes are a frequent rhetorical practice. Consequently, these fragments of conversation are actually instantiations of the larger rhetorical culture of remembering. These fragments are also extremely dense: a singular item – a joke, an allusion – evokes an entire world of associations or narratives.

The categories of practices described in this chapter raise significant questions about the strict compartmentalization of memory in *lieux de mémoire*. They suggest the contours of a medium of activities capable of disintegrating the notion of remembering as an activity that solidifies and secludes memory in discrete places. Moreover, considered from the perspective of these smaller, localized, contingent practices, remembering appears not as the unilateral activity of one representation or another, of one museum or another, or of one single practice or another, but rather as the cumulative effect of multiple activities that emerge from different areas of life, that circulate across different domains of existence, and that influence and reconfigure each other.

The next section of this chapter is dedicated to further exploring and illustrating the ways in which remembering processes emerge from fluid and intersecting practices, even as they have some formal but dynamic relationships to physical places.

The Theatre Director

Re-Enacting Betrayal

On Friday, June 8, I recorded the following in my observation notes:

“Yesterday, on Facebook, an acquaintance of mine, Iulia, created the X mm din Y km [X millimeters from Y kilometers] event. The description said it was a theatre performance based on a record from a communist secret police file. Only a few days ago a good friend of mine had told me,

‘You must see Gianina’s X mm... But I don’t think they will return to Bucharest while you’re there.’”

As I was told it is a “must see,” I exchanged a few Facebook messages with Iulia to let her know that I wanted to see the show and to ask her to introduce me to the director. Iulia is a theatre critic whom I knew from my former life in Romania, during which I was involved with theatre in various capacities. I knew she was friendly with the play’s artistic team. Not only did she agree to help me, but she also offered to pick me up in her car from somewhere downtown. She cautioned me however that she had to be there early to help with the setup. I was happy to get there sooner, as I would have the chance to observe more. I was also happy to have a ride, as the journey from my parents’ house to The National Museum of Contemporary Art was a rather complicated enterprise.

It was somewhat a matter of luck that “X mm from Y km” came to Bucharest while I was there. The show’s home was the Transylvanian town of Cluj, and it had already been on tour in the capital city just a month before my arrival in Romania. Happily, the theatre director managed to get funding for further circulating the performance in five Romanian cities and Bucharest was one of them. Three shows were scheduled at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, in the former House of the People on June 8, 9, and 10.

My friendship with Iulia earned me behind-the-scenes access. I had the opportunity to hang around the stage and the artists, witness their interactions, and even participate in the preparations for the performance.

They needed help to set up the space, and I offered a hand for writing “informative notes”⁵⁹ on the black rubber stage mat. Gianina, the director, gave me, Iulia and three other young women pieces of paper with fragments that she had copied from secret police files during her research in the archive. She also gave us pieces of chalk that we were to use for transferring these archival fragments to the floor. Down on our knees, we started working.

The first piece assigned to me read:

“A number of people complain about having to pay taxes for their cars—considering that they are not allowed to drive them. Source: Cătălin.”⁶⁰ I wrote carefully, so as not to overstep the space allotted to me for this fragment. Gianina checked on us every now and then, but she was more preoccupied with conferring with her actors. Although I was not able to hear their conversation, I assumed they were reviewing their tasks for that evening’s performance.

The chalk gave our moves a playful tinge, but we were nonetheless re-enacting the writing of betrayals. During the three performance days, the chalk inscriptions on the floor would be erased with each show and then re-inscribed again. But at the end of it all, in this space they were, unlike in the archive, transient.

When the entire black mat was covered in our white handwriting, I decided I deserved a cigarette break and went out to stand on the terrace of the coffee shop I had seen upon my arrival. Iulia, who was already there smoking, introduced me to a number of people. I would see some of them again in the following weeks for interviews.

The height of the fourth floor allowed me to see a rather eclectic landscape. In the background was a forest of tall apartment buildings. Closer to where I was standing, a larger figure: the Marriott Hotel. In the nearest area was a barren land on which a crane stood out. The machine was resting, but big holes in the ground all around it were proof of its hard work during previous weeks, maybe months. The crane had been busy preparing the ground for the foundations of the Romanian People’s Salvation Cathedral.

“What Do You Mean by Now? Now, This Year?”

The performance space was a rectangular room of about 1,500 square feet. As we entered, my friend took a seat by the theatre director, at the control panel where the lights, the two screen projectors, and the camera were coordinated. The control panel and the chairs stacked in several towers on the mat were the only pieces of décor thus far. In the middle of the black rubber carpet, a guy in blue jeans and a grey long-sleeved shirt encouraged the members of the audience to grab a chair. As the majority of people were choosing spots on the margins of the carpet, he repeated several times with an emphasis on the second half of the sentence:

“You can sit anywhere, including on the carpet.”

The carpet was filled with texts written in chalk. I took a chair and picked a spot on it. The fragment lying by my feet read: “During the show ‘One stormy night,’ G.N. got close to the lamp and said loud enough for everybody to hear him, ‘50%’ thus alluding to the electricity savings.”⁶¹

Five minutes later, some 50 people were seated on and around the carpet. The actors were ready to start. While playing their parts they had to be careful not to run into the small camera mounted on a tripod. The camera, set up in front of the control desk, was sending live images to the two screen projectors installed on opposite walls, to the left and right of the desk.

The actor who had invited us to grab seats as we entered spoke first:

“Allow me to introduce the actors. My name is Toma. Meet Mădălina,” he said, pointing toward a petite brunette woman. “Paula,” he stated, gesturing toward the other woman whose brown hair reached to her shoulders. “And Rolando,” he concluded acknowledging the taller man wearing a light beard. He continued, rather intriguingly:

“We have a text, we have a director, we have a visual artist, but we don’t have a playwright. The characters... We decided to have a draw because we could not decide who plays whom.”

All of the actors were dressed in blue jeans and long-sleeved grey shirts, except for Paula who wore a blue jean skirt. Toma pulled out four folded pieces of paper from the back pocket of his pants. He first held them high above his head so the audience could see them. Then he threw them on the floor while encouraging his colleagues to pick one of the pieces. After all the actors had selected one of the papers, each took turns disclosing to the public what his/her role was for the moment. Rolando had Dorin Tudoran, Toma drew Comrade Nicolae Croitoru, Paula picked D. R. Popescu, and Mădălina was TO, i.e. the operative technician (in charge of recording the meeting).

Next, they went through the door opposite the control desk to bring, as they announced out loud, “the props and costumes.” When they came back, the TO actor was carrying a table board and two supports. At this time, on top of their shirts, the actors had added on a darker grey suit jacket. Toma and Paula had mufflers. In addition, Toma was wearing a fur hat. It was an astrahan (Astrakhan), the kind of tall curly fur hat that the party elites – including Ceaușescu – would have worn.

As I knew from the event description posted on Facebook, the text of the play was in fact one single document from the 10,000-page “dosar de urmărire informativă” (informative surveillance file) kept by the communist secret police on the Romanian poet and writer Dorin Tudoran.⁶² When Tudoran applied for a passport⁶³ to leave the country with his family, the communist authorities started harassing him with the ultimate goal of persuading the writer to change his mind about emigrating. The document contained the notes on the meeting between Tudoran, tovarășul [comrade] Croitoru, the propaganda secretary for the Bucharest municipal committee of the Romanian Communist Party, and D. R. Popescu, the president of the Writers’ Union.

During the performance, the abundance of para-verbal elements supplied by the actors destabilized the written text. The text was confronted, engaged, and challenged in ways that inflected the discourses with ironic, parodic, humorous, sarcastic, and even absurd notes. The actors rendered visible the multiple interpretive possibilities of the text through the movements of their faces, the modulations of their voices, the frowning of their eyebrows, the trajectories of their gazes, the gestures of their arms, hands, and fingers, and through their positioning in space and in relation to each other. In this context, the audience became a direct participant, as it was required to continually renegotiate the conventions at play in the performance and to constantly construct and reconstruct the discourse before them.⁶⁴

From time to time, the actors stopped to say: "I'll take it from the top" or "Let's take it from the top." These utterances served as a reset button of sorts, as after each such instance, the four actors re-played the previous scene(s). Sometimes they replayed it just once. Other times, they tried two or three different modalities of performing a specific situation.

Furthermore, the actors switched the parts between them. One would say: "This is how far I was able to go" (with the part). And then he or she would "tag" one of the other actors and they would swap roles.

For instance, Rolando had started the show by playing the part of Tudoran. At one point, the part required him to say the following lines:

"I have a son who comes back from school with all sort of nonsense. My child is asked in school to memorize the poem 'The Party is my life.' I don't want to be put in the position of forbidding him to memorize the poem, and then, when he will ask why to tell him that the poem has nothing to do with what is true. I will pay (for) this with my life."

This was his chance to speak his mind; this was his chance to raise his child without lies; ultimately, this was his chance to be normal. Rolando said "I will pay (for) this with my life" several times, never quite feeling comfortable with saying it, never quite finding the right way to say it. After repeatedly failing, the actor broke character to say, "This is how far I was able to go." After Rolando designated her with a light touch on the shoulder, Paula took over Tudoran's part.

In fact, the actors repeatedly stepped out of character during the performance, thus underscoring the non-realistic key of the production. They regularly commented on their lines for the audience:

"Necșoiu or Țoiu"⁶⁵ ... what does it matter what they are called? The idea is that they have sent this man from one comrade to another!" Rolando addressed the question directly to the public, thus breaking the traditional theatrical convention.

And they regularly addressed questions to their public:

"Do you know what used to happen to the people who were asking to leave the country?" Paula said looking in the eyes of one young man in the audience.

Or: "By the way, do you think that we have law and legality today when private corporations do business with the state?"

The questions were most of the time left unanswered by the audience members. The actors however persisted in their effort to shake off the spectatorship mode of the people in the room. Paula, whose turn it was to play Dorin Tudoran at the moment played with word emphasis: "There is nothing left. We have nothing now. We have nothing now. We have nothing now. Now. Now. Now. Now we have nothing." Each time she uttered the sentence she emphasized a different word. Then she paused for a few seconds, with her index finger pressed gently against her lips, as if thinking about how to proceed. After scrutinizing for a few long seconds the men and women in the audience, she asked them to take a stand: "Please... Those of you who think that we have nothing now, join me. Take your chair and come sit by me." In one of the three evenings when the show was played, a woman in the audience wanted to be sure: "What do you mean by now? Now, this year?" Mădălina, the actress playing Tudoran at that time, replied quickly: "Yes. Now, this year." After receiving this answer, the woman, a skinny blond in her 40s, got up and moved her chair behind the petite

brunette actress. A few other people followed her, thus responding to Mădălina's call for support. Others remained in their places.

While conversations about communism are rather pervasive in Romanians' everyday exchanges, this performance insists on opening yet another dialogue on the topic. As framed by the actors' questions, the conversation should touch not on the past per se, but rather on the past's uncanny *presence*. The creators of the performance are perfectly aware of the culture's widespread, persistent practice of chatting about communism and attempts to transform it, to push it toward a more conscious, reflective engagement. In establishing this goal, the artists assume that the small chatter is inconsequential and, while it is overall non-normative, the performance suggests that there are worse and better ways of conversing about communism.

The performance and the Archive

The performance ended with a series of thought-provoking moments. The T.O. actor/actress showed us, page by page, the copy of the record on which the performative event was based; while s/he turned over the pages one by one, s/he used a red marker to cross all the pages titled "erratum." It was a way of enacting/making visible the actual physical act of cutting off parts of the original record. Second, after s/he was done, all the actors wrote on pieces of papers that had previously been glued on the wall by the exit:

"I confess having collaborated and ask for forgiveness."

Toma concluded the performance: "As you see, the floor is filled with informative notes. The walls, however, are empty. This is how much we were able to do / this is how long/far we were able to take it."

However, none of the individuals in the audience had anything to confess. They passed by the actors' confessions on their way out, leaving the space left for their statements blank. As they were emptying the room, Gianina, the theatre director, invited them to reconvene in about 10 minutes for a dialogue about the performance. She indicated the coffee shop terrace as the location for this dialogue.

Diana Taylor claims that there is "a rift" between "the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports,

ritual).”⁶⁶ This cognitive rift between the knowledge made possible by the archive and the understanding enabled through the repertoire was at the core of both Gianina Cărbunariu’s performance *and* the post-performance discussions. In contrast to the alleged fixity of the archive, “the repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being a part of the transmission.”⁶⁷ While challenging the authority of the archive, the performance and the subsequent dialogue with the audience engaged people in a co-production of knowledge. “I wanted us to understand together what happened,” said Gianina during one of the discussion sessions.

Although based on official records, the performance did not try to simply reproduce the archival document on stage, but rather to interrogate its status as a “historical” carrier of truth. Against the gravity usually associated with archival documents, the performance at times appeared as a playful rehearsal in which all the performative possibilities of the text were played out on stage. This modality of playing (with, on) the text suggests “the impossibility of an objective relation to an event,”⁶⁸ but more importantly, of an objective relation to the archive. The performance questions—if not completely rejects—the evidentiary capacity of the archive by deconstructing its historical record into a seemingly exhaustive multiplicity of gestures.

According to Biesecker, the archive is “the provisionally settled scene of our collective invention, of our collective invention of us and of it”⁶⁹ and draws attention to “the radical indeterminacy of the archive as the opening onto the vicissitudes of rhetoric.”⁷⁰ The collective invention of the Romanian Securitate (former secret police) archive is an effect not only of the discourses surrounding it, but also of the practices that

engage this collection of records. Between its incompleteness and its evidentiary force, between secrecy and openness, between practices of reading and practices of use, and between the archive as a ground for political games, the archive as the object of the struggle for justice, and the archive as a scene for historical discovery, the Romanian secret police archive is a rather messy place of memory. Furthermore, the establishment of the archive as an institution has a rather long and very convoluted history.

Even before being constituted as a concrete institutional space, the archive has been haunted by a specter of incompleteness. In 1990, a Romanian journalist discovered that the new Romanian Information Service had buried seven tons of documents in a village near Bucharest. Some of these documents were related to the activity of the Service after 1989, but some of them were surveillance files from communism.⁷¹ This discovery rapidly evolved into a full-blown media scandal accompanied by extensive, heated public debates about the enduring power of former secret police employees.

The significance of the Securitate archive was the result of the role granted to its collection of documents in questions of transitional justice.⁷² Ensuring access to the files was viewed as an instrumental step in lustration, but also as part of a broader process of finding out deeper truths about communism, including the right of individuals to know the identity of the persons who surveilled, investigated, or denounced them. A law of “access to the [secret police] personal file and exposure of the Securitate as political police” was passed in 1999. The law stipulated the creation of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS). The Council’s role was to administrate the access to the files, but for the first six years of its activity the files “continued to be housed by the Romanian Information Service in its out-of-reach military units.”⁷³ In

2006, when over two million files were transferred to the physical location of the Council,⁷⁴ the press releases of the Romanian Information Service (SRI), as well as the media, kept the public up-to-date on the progression of the files' journey from SRI to CNSAS. Headline updates such as, "On May 15, SRI will start the transfer of the former Securitate files to CNSAS," "SRI transferred an additional 1,225 files from the secret police archive," and "The last files are on their way to CNSAS" described the process almost frame by frame. Regarded as an achievement, the transfer of files was evaluated not only in numbers, but also in kilometers. The online edition of *Curierul Național* (The National Courier) from January 4, 2006 titled one of its reports, "12 linear kilometers of the controversial Securitate files are over to CNSAS." In fact, the physical dimensions of the CNSAS archive are announced with extreme precision. According to Stan, the archive "consists of 25 kilometers of files on victims, four kilometers on informers, and another six kilometers of files dealing with denunciations."⁷⁵ The title of Gianina Cărbunariu's theatre performance, "X mm from Y km," treats this precision with irony, while at the same time suggesting that even examining as much as one small fragment from the totality of the archive raises a host of rather uncomfortable questions.

While the establishment of the archive has been applauded in the public sphere, secrecy continues to frustrate the open access to the archive. The 1999 law stipulated, "only those files whose content posed no threat to national security could be made public."⁷⁶ In addition, a decision of the National Council "kept under lock" the files of Romanian religious leaders of all denominations until 2007.⁷⁷

The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives was charged with, among other things, investigating public figures' "past involvement with the

Securitate.”⁷⁸ The investigations are usually concluded with the issuance of certificates of collaboration or non-collaboration with the Securitate that are subsequently made public. Over the years, the Council has exposed several public figures as Securitate’s informers. Among them were politicians, public intellectuals, religious figures, and journalists for which this exposure acted as a death sentence for their public life. Many voices, however, accuse the Council of using these certificates in the service of various political players.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the Council’s exposures were supplemented by subsequent public apologies from “guilty” parties, as well as by voluntary confessions. In this context of *praxis*, in which the archive is usually consulted to find moral errors and faults, Gianina Cărbunariu mined the archive for a record of a person that she could set up as an example of moral integrity beyond reproach.⁸⁰

Once the institutional apparatus was in place to administer the access to the files, a series of evolving practices started to define the relationships between the archive, individuals, larger public spaces and the remembering of communism. For instance, access to Securitate files “gave former dissidents the opportunity to complement their recollections with documents,”⁸¹ offered researchers a new territory to explore, provided journalists with a distinctively eminent source of news stories, and aroused the curiosity of private persons. As a result of this busy activity, the records do not exist only on the physical shelves of the archive, but are propelled into broader circulation as books, media articles, and performances such as Gianina’s. The life of the archival records is also extended into virtual space. Electronic versions of hard paper documents are uploaded onto online media sites and non-governmental organizations webpages, as well as onto personal blogs. These movements transfer the archive once again, this time from CNSAS

into a larger and even more accessible space of debate. These activities are primarily oriented toward historical discovery, “knowing the past.” In opposition to these practices, Gianina did not explore the archive in order to discover something new. In fact, the 10 pages of archival records that served as the textual basis for her production had already been made public in a book published by Dorin Tudoran.⁸² One of the points of her engagement with these documents was to expose, question, and struggle with the *already known*. In her staging, it is not the not-known but rather the already-known that is the source of uncertainty.

Gianina’s performance engages and contests the archive whose history I sketched above. The theatre show extends the archive’s travels and, more importantly, wrests it from its textual cover. The other practices, albeit extremely diverse, treat the archive as a source of textual material to be read and interpreted according to some professional authority. Gianina’s show, on the other hand, approaches the archive as a text to be *performed*, thus reminding us that history (and memory) has always been alive and no text (or performance, for that matter) can recover it in a definite manner. She thus questions both the authority of the archive and of its readers.

By using the actors’ repertoire of gestures—in fact, by using bodies in concrete situations—the performance multiplies the potential signifying possibilities of the record. By never settling on a particular interpretation and by permitting contradictory hermeneutical directions to coexist within the same performative space, the show allows the record to remain undecided, against the deep desire of discourses on justice to use the truth delivered by the archive in order to settle the score.

Thus, the performance shatters the myth of the archive as a stand-in for the past.⁸³ In the performance, the record (the memory) of the event is revealed as dependent on movement, interaction, and alteration. The memory (the record) is revealed as unfinished, as always resisting definitive utterances and modulations. The reluctance of the actors to finish their lines is not only about the characters they play, as Gianina indicated; it is also about the fact that there is a point when memory (of the characters, of the actors) becomes uncertain of itself.

“I Wanted to See What’s in There”

The archival record used as textual support for the performance represented only a few millimeters from the thousands of kilometers of Securitate (secret police) files that were transferred over from the Romanian Intelligence Service, which inherited the Securitate’s archives, to the National Council for the Study of Secret Police Archives. As she stated during the post-performance dialogue, Gianina’s curiosity about the archive arose in response to media reports on the aggregate length of the files. In addition, *X mm from Y km* was also prompted by her previous work. On one hand, her public performance engaged and responded to broader cultural discourses and forms. On the other hand, there was also an individual, contingent trajectory that contributed to the show’s emergence.

In Romania, Gianina’s production of *X mm from Y km* is labeled as independent theatre. In the Romanian context, theatrical “independence” is affirmed, in both financial and artistic terms, in relation to state-funded cultural institutions. In artistic terms, Romanian theater professionals use “independent”⁸⁴ to designate productions that diverge from “the ‘artistic theatre’ turned museum” created by the majority of state-funded

performing arts institutions.⁸⁵ The museum-like attitude is thought to be a result of cultural practices instituted during communism as a response to the regime's propaganda and censorship.⁸⁶ Most importantly, the public-funded theatrical institutions avoid productions that would debate and reflect on Romanians' personal and collective history and that would respond to "everyday life provocative issues."⁸⁷ A new generation of independent artists, however, emerging especially in the early 2000s, started to produce new forms of theatre that engage, in a general manner, the "unsettling facts" of the social, economic, and political events of the immediate present.⁸⁸ In particular, some of them, like Gianina Cărbunariu, are interested in Romania's recent history and the influence that the totalitarian system still has on the Romanian "*here and now*."⁸⁹

Accordingly, Gianina's performance speaks back not only to the archive and the discourses and practices that surround it, but also to the traditions and the institutional and artistic forms, discourses, and events that came to define the Romanian theatrical practices after 1989. *X mm from Y km* releases an energy that counters the fixity of the historical archive and the "museum-like" attitude of established performing arts institutions. The performance's reliance on the actors' rehearsed improvisations, the spontaneity of their interactions with the audience, and the energies and stories unfolding in the post-performance dialogues amount to a counter-movement to forms of memory that are seen as static. In this way, Cărbunariu seeks to draw attention to memory as a *lived* relationship with the present.

During the three evenings I witnessed the post-performance dialogues, I heard Gianina explaining her work and what inspired it:

"I kept seeing those pictures with the kilometers of files from CNSAS [The National Council for the Study of the Secret Police Archives], you know? And I wanted to find out what is in the archive... I wanted to see what's in there..."

And also... When I was doing research for another performance... I worked on another project, in 2009... Sold Out... about how the Romanian authorities sold sași [Transylvanian Saxons] and şvabi [Swabs] to the West-German authorities between 1950 and 1989. During my interviews, many of the people I talked to mentioned the secret police files. So I really wanted to see the archive. I was curious to see what the archive looks like and what one can find in these files. That's why I went to CNSAS. At CNSAS there is also an oral history archive – interviews with people who have consulted their secret police files. I decided in the end to choose one of the records from Dorin Tudoran's Securitate file. There are three versions of this record: a complete one; one that was "periat" [groomed, in the sense of altered] for Ceaușescu, because people knew that Ceaușescu became hysterical in relation to certain topics; and a third version – the groomed one with addenda and / or errata. The existence of these [different] versions shows the way in which the files were constructed. Thus the question becomes: what has actually happened?"

During the first evening I missed some portions of Gianina's presentation while gaining the lived memories of a sociology professor who sat next to me during the dialogue. Professor Rostaș, whom I knew from college, came that evening at Iulia's invitation, and the three of us sat next to each other during the post-performance dialogue. The professor, sitting to my right, whispered some of his own memories to my ear. "I also worked at Luceafărul⁹⁰ Magazine, where Tudoran worked. They could ask me about this affair. I had the pleasure of being acquainted with Comrade Croitoru."

In the meantime, people had already started to share their impressions and opinions of the performance. A young man whose back was turned to me ruminated: "I think you miss some of the impact you could have if you do it [the performance] in a realist key. I have seen many films and theatre shows about communism and none of them is able to take us back in time to the way things really were."

To this charge, Gianina replied, "We wanted to have a distance. We have this distance in relation to this topic anyway. And we did not want to do a re-constitution of the meeting, because all we had were some written words."

Professor Rostaș, his body leaned toward mine, said, "Art is art. Art is different from history."

After a moment of reflection, Gianina spoke about the invisible incidents that contributed to the making of the performance:

"This is exactly what we wanted to stress. Dorin Tudoran was trying to speak in a normal fashion and the other two kept speaking this wooden language. The fact that the actors and actresses are interchangeable means that each of us can be the character of Dorin Tudoran and each of us can be the characters of Croitoru and D. R. Popescu. What happened and why we chose to play it like this... During the rehearsals, one of the actors got stuck. He was not able to play Tudoran anymore, he was not able to feel and be as radical as his part. Tudoran says, 'I pay (for) this with my life' and it is difficult to undertake such a statement in a radical manner. It is difficult să faci un erou (to play/make a hero). During the performance we had several rules. First, we wanted to take Tudoran to the end and all the actors had to participate in playing/making him. Second, we wanted to allow the audience to sit anywhere in the performance space because we wanted a live process. We wanted to give to our spectators the freedom to choose. Because the freedom of choice always implies some risks."

In the preceding analysis, I discussed, among other things, how the performance alters the archive by breaking the written record into an abundance of gestures, inflections, and postures. I also sketched the ways in which the performance attempts to counter if not to break the “museum-like” habitus of established cultural institutions. But in addition to being responsive to larger cultural rhetorics, the performance is also the product of the director’s individual trajectory and a response to the little but no less significant routines and occurrences of everyday life. The glimpse of a photograph in the newspaper, the event during rehearsals, and the work on the previous project marked the path toward the emergence of this performance, which, in the end, remembered and integrated all these occurrences. With and within these different dimensions—the broader cultural currents and the “small” events of everyday life—the performance helps us “to recognize the rehearsed and produced and creative nature of everyday life.”⁹¹ It also helps us recognize that the labor invested in remembering is not always an organized, rational, and calculated rhetorical invention, but also the result of messy and ambiguous circumstances. As Hawhee put it, “rhetoric isn’t just a cerebral, conscious process,” because it is also “messy” and “unpredictable.”⁹² In what follows, I turn to another way of using art for communism, equally ambiguous and intricate.

The Designer

A Communist Bar

*On July 16 I finally got to see Atelier Mecanic [Mechanical Workshop]. I kept hearing about this bar as a place that revives some of the material culture of communism. Several of my initial interviewees had mentioned it as one of the trendy spots in the city. Someone described it as “a place where hipsters usually go.”
From Café Verona, I took the Magheru Boulevard toward Piața Universității*

[University Square]. It was a very hot and humid day. I could barely breathe and my back was uncomfortably sweaty. As I passed by the National Theatre, I heard the busy machinery of the construction crew. According to the online edition of the Romanian newspaper Capital from March 7 2010, Ceaușescu disliked the original theatre building inaugurated in 1973. First, he resented the fact that the construction of this significant cultural edifice had started under his predecessor. Second, he frowned on the hat-like shape of the roof. When a fire damaged the building in 1978, Ceaușescu took the opportunity to require major architectural revisions. One of these modifications addressed the shape of the roof by pouring 1,200 tons of cement on top of the initial structure. In 2011, the construction workers and their machines started the diligent process of bringing the National Theatre back to its original form from 1973.

I took my eyes off the construction in progress to descend into the passage that traverses the square underground. After resurfacing by the Bucharest History Museum, I entered the labyrinth of streets in the old city center. Atelier Mecanic is on Covaci [Blacksmith shop] Street. My eyes were drawn to the unusual logo positioned on the wall to the right side of the entrance door. “ATELIER” [workshop] was simply painted in a flat light blue. But the adjective “MECANIC” [mechanical] was a sophisticated yet straightforward invention as all of the letters were made of mechanical tools: spanners, wrenches, a pair of pliers for the M, screw vises, a third of a serrated wheel for the C, and screws. After I entered and found a comfortable grey armchair with a slightly rusty frame, I ordered lemonade. The bar was quiet at that hour. Only two other women at a table behind me were having a whispered conversation. As my attention was focused on the décor, I sporadically overheard a few words: “our generation,” “tutoring,” and “Madame Bovary.” The waitress came, handing me a transparent jar with a straw and my lemonade in it. It was the kind of fruit preserve jar that I remembered seeing on the shelves of the communist grocery stores during my childhood. From the jar, my eyes moved to the rundown melamine table and to the ashtray made of a rolling contact bearing in front of me. Then I proceeded to examine the many work safety posters on the walls.

LUCRAȚI NUMAI CU MASCA DE PROTECȚIE

[Work only with your protective mask]

FUMATUL OPRIT. PERICOL DE INCENDIU

[No smoking. Fire danger]

The lacquered, heavy wood bar top was checkered with pale blue tiles, matching the light color of the word ATELIER in the logo outside. From where I sat, I was able to observe the entrance door and, to its left, a workbench that had been converted into a DJ station. An Apple computer, speakers, and a mixing console were all crowded onto the bench. Here, another sign: a black triangle on a yellow background with a thunder symbol. The caption read:

ÎNALTĂ TENSIUNE. PERICOL DE MOARTE.

[High Voltage. Danger of death]

About five feet of the wall—from the ground up—were painted in a dull green color. The remainder—up to the ceiling—was colored in a pasty blue that matched the bar tiles. A light-brownish continuous line separated the green and the blue paint.

For a while I followed the line in its travels around the room, but at some point another section of the wall drew my attention. Somewhere above the brown paint

stroke, another safety sign warned:

EVITAȚI ACCIDENTELE DE MUNCĂ PURTÂND ECHIPAMENTELE DE PROTECȚIE.

[Prevent workplace accidents by wearing your protective gear]

When I stopped my examination to shoo away a fly hovering over my lemonade, a conversation between two men standing by the DJ station occurred. "I have no idea what these people are doing... The DJ sent me some flyers, posters... they should post them on Facebook."

Next, a woman entered to ask the bartender for two "citronade." Did I make a mistake when I asked for lemonade? Actually, it would make very much sense for this place to use "citronadă," the passé term for "lemonade." After serving the two drinks, the bartender, a blonde woman in a beige dress and fancy rope sandals started dancing to an upbeat tune. On the wall behind her, next to the shelves holding legions of bottles and glasses, there was something like a tool for measuring pressure. Or that is what I thought it was, anyway; I am not an expert on tools, machines, or factory equipment. After grabbing the two drinks, the woman who asked for "citronade" went to sit somewhere in the front area of the shop. I followed her silhouette as she walked outside. After she disappeared from my sight, I registered, through the entrance door, the sunflower oilcloth covering one of the bar's outdoor tables. While passing by it, three people commented something and then laughed. For a brief moment, one of them stayed behind. Through the doorframe I saw him making a grimace before catching up with the others. Around this time, I decided to leave. When I paid, my mind was busy making plans for interviewing the person who designed this place.

"I Am Nostalgic for Any Time Period"

Boyer argues, "nostalgia is heteroglossic," and "we should work to recognize and represent the dialogical gossamer of idiosyncratic references, interests, and affects that are channeled through nostalgic discourse."⁹³ Located in the historic center of downtown Bucharest, the nostalgia stimulated by Atelier Mecanic speaks with multiple voices. There is a voice for communism, one for industrialization, and one that reverberates in its historical surroundings. All of these voices in their turn have different inflections. Corvin, the man who designed the bar, introduced me to some of these voices and inflections.

I met Corvin, the designer of Atelier Mecanic, at a small coffee table on a sidewalk across from Parcul Cișmigiu [Cișmigiu Park]. The park is the oldest garden in Bucharest, dating back to 1854, and owes its name to two public fountains (cișmele) built in the area as early as 1779. Corvin agreed to meet with me after Ana-Maria told him about my research. It took a while to synchronize our schedules, especially given that Corvin had to travel abroad for about one week. When we finally agreed on a time and

day, he cautioned me that he was still very busy and did not have too much time on his hands. I promised not to keep him more than 30-40 minutes.

I rode the bus to Kogălniceanu Square, and then I took Schitu Măgureanu Boulevard. The sight of my former highschool across the street captivated me for a while. It even provoked a sigh that I shook off quickly to focus my attention on the meeting. At no. 35 I found the coffee shop Corvin had picked for our interview. It was called, unimaginatively but to the point, Caffe & Latte. The tagline said, in English, "italian coffe bar & pastries shop." I barely had time to settle into a dark blue plastic chair when I saw Corvin coming. I recognized him from the pictures I found of him on the Internet before leaving home that day. Skinny, tanned, dark hair, almost black eyes, dark blue t-shirt, blue jeans, preoccupied. When he sat down, he gave me the impression that he was happy to take a break from whatever had kept him busy before, but that he was hard-pressed to go back quickly. So I started the conversation almost right away, by asking him about his design for Atelier. His sentences were somewhat hesitant at the beginning, but as he continued to speak he became more unreserved.

"Well, I already had this... passion... Well, passion!" He seemed to repeat the word as if somewhat uncertain that it was the right one. "I liked industrial design anyway, these more austere, more pure forms, but I did not have many opportunities to put them into practice. And Atelierul (the workshop)... we initially wanted to do it in a place where there used to be an actual mechanical workshop... but for different reasons it was not possible, and we finally found this space on Covaci Street. And we realized that we could do it there, I mean... it wasn't completely out of the place's spirit because there used to be all sorts of workshops in that area... Blade sharpening workshops and whatnot... what's more... we wanted to have a pretty big collection of objects such as... signs for... workplace safety and posters... and tin foils... So that's what it was... Mainly it's about an aesthetic affinity with these functional forms, and with the functional beauty. That's why I did it."

Several critics depict nostalgia as a manifestation of modernity,⁹⁴ as the "modern disease per se."⁹⁵ But as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Eastern Europe's relation to modernity is rather tortuous. Was communism a rejection of modernity? Or was communism an alternative mode of modernity that failed? Do Eastern Europe's present issues represent "the legacy of a disintegrating mode of modernization"?⁹⁶ How do we conceive of modernity in Eastern Europe and what are *this modernity's* relationships with nostalgia? One might conceive of nostalgia as a disease, but in the Eastern European context, one should be vigilant in localizing the body it pains.

When Corvin talks about how industrialization looks the same everywhere, whether in Romania or in the Netherlands, he conceives nostalgia as a universal force capable of integrating post-communist Romania into a larger European discourse about modernity's past. Rather than emphasizing the former communist regime, Corvin prefers to create a past in which Romania's modernization processes are parallel to those of the rest of Europe. Stewart reminds us that nostalgia is "a cultural practice, not a given content; its forms, meanings and effects shift with the context – it depends on where the speaker stands in the landscape of the present."⁹⁷ The content of the nostalgia is thus in the "positing of a 'once was' in relation to a 'now,'" and Corvin chose to imagine "once was" as a past when industrialization was a common European experience. Despite critics who have regarded post-communist nostalgia as a distortion of a problematic past,⁹⁸ Corvin imagined his bar as a space where the past, reinvented rather than distorted, tells the story of a modernity being experienced in unison by all European countries. His nostalgia participates in a collective Romanian imagination⁹⁹ that positions the country as having always been a part of Europe, because "memory transforms the past we have known into what we think it should have been."¹⁰⁰

As a way of understanding in more depth how Corvin conceives the relationship with the past, I reminded him of the statements on his website. "On your website,¹⁰¹ Atelier's description includes an observation about Romanians' uncomfortable relationship with their past. You even go so far as to say that they are rather inclined to erase their past. So Atelier is an effort to integrate, reintegrate the past..."

At this moment, his phone rang, and our conversation was briefly interrupted. Corvin ended the phone chat rather quickly, apologizing as he placed his mobile back on the table, next to the coffee cup, and then continued his train of thought without difficulty.

"Well, yes. It is an attempt to preserve this past, but it is because—yes, I am nostalgic, but not for that period, I am nostalgic for any period... I mean... If it were about something medieval, we would have tried to preserve that medieval thing. Plainly and simply it just happened to coincide with some interests from that period... Typography, those posters... It just happened to coincide, but we don't feel anything special for that period. But speaking about the past, you know... I'm assuming that for

every Romanian... if one goes to Rome or London and notices how they preserve the past and then... when one comes back, one can see the contrast. Here there is a manic desire to erase it, to do something new all the time, to demolish, to replace. I think it's genetic, I don't know, this thing about continually erasing one's traces. And one might want to counter this current. I think that this is what we sometimes try, if possible... Because, in fact, all the objects in the bar... They are not communist; it's an industrial aesthetic that was universal in its time. It's not communism. A lot of people say, "oh, Atelierul Mecanic, go and see a communist bar." And there are all sorts of such lozinci [political slogans], because Romanians make this association between communism and industrialization. The English associate industrialization with the Victorian era. Plainly and simply, for them the industrialization occurred in that period, for us it started in the 50s. But it's not... I'll say it again: it has nothing to do with the political regime when this occurred. The best thing that I heard or read about Atelier... On one of these websites, I don't know, Bucharest in your pocket or... The comment of an Englishman... It said "see how Britain might have looked if communism had occurred." I mean... I was really happy that he was able to see something British and something communist, because he felt the part that is shared, and in fact universal about industrialization. In the Netherlands, for instance, for the Dutch Design Week, there were a bunch of things that looked like Atelier because they were made in the former Phillips factories. And there were all sorts of industrial residues, all sorts of turbines and it looked... But nobody would have thought to call it communist. Industrial."

"And yet I come back to the mission statement. Atelier is not only about industrialization and industrial, it is also about communism," I pressed the issue, seeking further details.

"It is also about communism, because in our context they are linked. Even if we wanted to separate them, we couldn't. It's inevitable."

Corvin's expression of nostalgia for the past is spoken from a present affected by the circulation of modernity's imaginaries,¹⁰² where the local past can be imagined in conjunction or accordance with cultural scenarios that come from elsewhere.¹⁰³ In this context, "modern" expresses a more general "consciousness of an age that imagines itself as having made the transition from the old to the new."¹⁰⁴ Thus, Corvin's nostalgia is future-oriented. Despite the discourses that construct Eastern Europe as lagging behind,¹⁰⁵ the bar's factory equipment, by alluding to a world that is now extinct, looks forward to a world that has yet to arrive.

The contrast between old and new, however, becomes salient due to the intricacy of the surrounding context. The historic center in downtown Bucharest, known as the

“old center,” is an area left relatively untouched by the communists’ urbanization plans. Here, in a rather small space, reminders of the old history of the city, dating back to the 16th century,¹⁰⁶ are huddled together on dense, narrow, macadamized streets. The names of these streets—Șelari (saddlers), Covaci (blacksmiths), Băcani (grocers), and so on—are reminiscent of the 17th century craftsmen and merchants that settled in the area after Bucharest became the capital city of the Wallachia Principality. The inns and churches that remain from that period mark the area as a place charged with a history that is relevant for Romanians’ identity.¹⁰⁷ Today, the former craftsmen’s and merchants’ streets are heavily populated with spaces of consumption whose unique features and events are relentlessly marketed in city and tourist guides. Dickinson has argued that “memories place both landscape and individuals within a stabilizing and authenticating past”¹⁰⁸; however, the memories that circulate in this area reveal instead a rather hectic and eclectic space of continual making and remaking. In other words, while the past might be authenticating, it is far from being stabilizing. The repeated transformations of this place that have occurred in the years following communism had to do not only with the dynamic nature of remembering, but also with the difficulties faced by authorities attempting to finalize the urbanization projects, difficulties reflecting complicated issues related to ownership,¹⁰⁹ displacement,¹¹⁰ financial resources, and corruption, but also to a lack of real consensus about what should be done with the space and how it should be done.¹¹¹

If landscapes “are in the eye of the beholder”¹¹² and their meanings depend on “networks of knowledge,”¹¹³ the old center landscape is framed in several competing and overlapping ways. Authorities, architects, and non-governmental actors see it as a

problem that needs correction, a perspective that reflects a desire to preserve and protect the history of the place. Debates over ownership and displacement occasionally bring forth the old center's signification as human habitat. Entrepreneurs see it as an opportunity for wealth and tourists and locals perceive it as a landscape of consumption, creating an economy that is based, in no small degree, on nostalgia. Atelier Mecanic resides in this place, in the intersection of these rhetorical currents. The straightforward functionality of the objects creates an atmosphere of simplicity and frugality in the bar. The old world materialized in the mechanical pieces of equipment dislodged from old Romanian communist factories stands in contrast to some of the other restaurants in the area that emphasize technology, sophistication, and grandeur. It also stands in contrast with even older times, the times of the medieval craftsmen and inns, some of them still standing and serving as restaurants and hotels. It also stands alongside the world of capital, as the old inter-war banking buildings located in the area are now home to "financial and management institutions, ministries, firms and multinational companies."¹¹⁴ While Atelier's staged return to industrialization is set in opposition to some of the landscape's elements,¹¹⁵ at the same time it participates in the landscape's "picturesque and eclectic"¹¹⁶ totality.

"But we also wanted something local," Corvin continued after admitting to the inevitable link between industrialization and communism. "There are multiple things to consider here... On one hand, it's the industrial aesthetics, but on the other hand we also wanted something local because there are so many places that cannot offer a local characteristic. The world is full of pubs and Italian restaurants... You go to Thailand, and you find five pubs on the main street. And it's very odd. You come to Romania, and, just the same, you find pubs at every corner. It seemed important to make it local and then yes, it also has the communist flavor. But what if we had Dutch posters? (He laughs at the idea). Both versions are somewhat true. It is also communist, but it's just that the arrow, I don't know... The dynamic is inverted. We didn't think about doing a communist bar and it ended up being an industrial one. We thought about doing a bar with functional aesthetic and local flavor. And it ended up being industrial-communist."

As much as the design of the bar was intended to stress industrialization, and thus modernity, as a universal human experience, the bar's rhetorical effects well exceed the original intentions of its creator. As Corvin himself recognizes, the functional aesthetic that he used was quickly and quite enthusiastically embraced as "communist." As he stated, it was "inevitable." Even as Corvin attempts to render the Netherlands and Romania as homologous, Romania's modernization is inextricably linked to the communist regime.¹¹⁷ But the historical factuality is not necessarily the primary reason why communism and industrialization interblend. The fusion is also an effect of the "authenticity" of the objects that transform the bar into something that resembles a museum.

"Boxes of Pioneer Scarves"

As he disclosed in the interview, the designer rummaged through ruined communist factories and salvaged objects in a manner he referred to as "collection." This account alludes to the history of the objects prior to the moment of their collection, thus establishing them as genuine historical artifacts. The story of his scavenging is frequently mentioned in news features and marketing materials as a way of authenticating¹¹⁸ the place and the objects in it. In addition, the idea of "collection" points to the shift in context—the end of communism, the end of communist factories—that made these objects collectable in the first place.

As I was interested in the efforts people go to in order to salvage, save, or collect objects from communism, I asked, "You talked about a collection... How did you collect all these objects?"

"Well... I used to work in the movies and with the various filming locations, we came by factories and all sorts of bizarre spaces... and every time I was in such a space I took something with me from there... The posters on the walls... These factories were about to be demolished or converted into something else anyway. And it was a shame for

this kind of graphics [to be wasted] ... the simplicity... Practically I don't really understand art, paintings and whatnot... They do not provoke any emotion in me. On the other hand, this functional craft that immediately communicates what it wants to communicate... I am more sensitive to it. That's how it all started. So... I don't have.... I don't have any nostalgia for that period, it was not the reason I collected these objects. But aesthetically I have an attraction to exactly this type of object, on the line between art, design, and functionality....

In the English version of his professional website, Corvin describes Atelier as follows:

“Atelier Mecanic (Mechanical Workshop) is a bar made of 1950 to 1970 industrial relics, salvaged leftovers, graphics and original furniture. Romanians have an uncomfortable relationship with their past which usually ends up in simply erasing it: factories were perceived as a symbol of communism and keeping some memories of it was by no means a priority after the Revolution. 50 years of industrialization vanished in no time, thrown at the scrap yard. Atelier Mecanic ironically brings them back.”¹¹⁹

The collection is thus meant to salvage some *things* from the dying world of communist factories and, as such, is connected in spirit with other small gestures, not all of them strictly private in their scope. Maradona, for instance, offered the following account:

“A while back, our offices were located by the Muzica (Music) store. The store used to have numerous objects from the communist period and, at some point, the people there threw them out. They had a trashcan outside and I saw boxes and boxes of pioneer scarves and pioneer uniform braids... I took them and then shared them with others... I saved some of them for myself....”

These acts of salvaging depend, to a certain degree, on opportunities offered by everyday life. For Maradona, his office location brought the material leftovers of communism directly into his path. For Corvin, his trajectory of salvaging unfolded while working in the movie industry, which facilitated his encounter with factory vestiges. These two situations, as well as the examples I shared above under “preserving communism,” point to a “circulating ecology of effects, enactments, and events”¹²⁰ that brings together both conspicuously public and ambiguously private contexts. And while

Atelier is one conspicuously public place, the role of Corvin's unique positions in and connections to the world—as a designer, as someone who works in the movie industry, as someone who is attracted to functional forms, and as someone who happened upon old communist factories—cannot be disregarded. These situations also point to the fact that less conscious, even somewhat impulsive, practices of remembering exist alongside, rather than in contrast to, self-conscious activities.

Corvin's acts of salvaging also evoke the ruins of communist factories.

Vaniousha, one of my interviewees, called these industrial residues “communist corpses.” He depicted them as “all sorts of factories and plants, hectares and more hectares of waste and debris“ that remind him of communism. For Vaniousha, the corpses functioned as signs, as material *indexes* for the continuity of communism in the present. For Corvin, on the other hand, these corpses are *symbols* of a dying world in need of preservation.

“I Don't Know How I Have It”

On one hand, the historical charge of the objects contained within it makes Atelier into a space resembling a museum: a fragmented depository of the communist past. As such, Atelier is somewhat amenable to being analyzed as a “place of memory” for which such concepts as “experiential landscape”¹²¹ or “space of attention”¹²² are remarkably useful. Such an analysis would foreground the calculation of rhetorical effects that emerge from the material and spatial arrangements in place as seen through the eyes of scholars-as-visitors.¹²³ However, as an everyday space, the bar allows for more flexible and banal interactions with the objects of memory that populate the space. Dickinson writes that “spaces like museums, national parks, art installations and memorials are often visited precisely because of their symbolic importance,” while the “banal spaces of the

everyday are visited in nearly non-conscious ways.”¹²⁴ Atelier defies this kind of division between self-conscious and non-conscious memory practices, pushing us to consider how both aspects of memory are an integral part of our remembering practices.

The objects lifted by Corvin from communist factories in ruin are re-arranged and re-contextualized in a mundane space of consumption. Once located in the everyday space of communal factories, they are now objects of a public-private commercial space.¹²⁵ In addition to this re-contextualization, the work of the designer in the Atelier’s space aestheticizes the rough factory equipment. Ana-Maria, a frequent visitor to Atelier, offered valuable insight in this regard:

“They use objects they found in factories... But at the same time there is equilibrium and harmony in the colors and shapes... And that has nothing to do with the natural aspect of a situation that they would like to reproduce there, in the space....”

Ana-Maria’s observation suggests that the elements of the bar have been “de-naturalized.” Denaturalization is, in part, the effect of how the objects are being used. Displaced from factories, they are now objects of leisure. Thus they have entered the “commodity phase” of their careers, which, according to Appadurai, implies the existence of a social environment that allowed for this process of commodification to take place.¹²⁶ In this case, some form of nostalgia warrants the temporal symbolic status of Atelier’s objects as commodities. Nostalgia, however, does not reside “positively in the sign or commodity, but it is produced only as an effect of its circulation.”¹²⁷ Thus, the value and the significance of Atelier’s décor depend on a larger cultural disposition constituted by the circulation of nostalgic practices and objects.

In addition, as Ana-Maria observed, denaturalization is also the effect of the objects’ manipulation in the logic of a different craft, a different practice than the one that

originally produced them. The designer's work on and with the objects points to something other than a passive consumption or use, as is the case, for instance, with the consumption of "traditional crafts."¹²⁸ At the same time, the designer's artistic practices are at odds not only with the history of the objects' production, but also with the social world that they evoke synecdochically. In Atelier, the world of the communist factory and workers comes to stand for communism without too much critical reflection on the economies of social stratification that, despite propaganda, marked communism and still mark Romania's contemporary society as well.¹²⁹ For instance, Ana-Maria confessed that she did not have too much experience with the factory environment, and yet she found that some of the things in the space were familiar to her:

"I recognize the furniture, although I am rather young... They say that the furniture is from the 60s, but I know it nonetheless, because this kind of furniture existed in the 80s as well... in the waiting areas... I don't know... the doctor's office waiting rooms, or... hospital. And of course, the industrial areas... But this, the familiarity with the industrial imaginary... I don't know how I have it, because I was not taken to visit so many factories as a kid...."

Later in the interview she added,
"The walls are painted in that green-grey... But it's not the famous public restroom green, the dark green one. And then that line at..." After she took a few seconds to ponder, she spoke smoothly, as if pondering every word. Her voice was charged with emotion. *"I don't know, it's at the eyes' level or a little lower... at about one and a half meters... That line between the oil paint, so the wall doesn't get dirty, and the portion covered with lime..."* She continued in a more neutral voice. *"And this is, I don't know... For many of us it is a very clear reference because we had this... we also had this line in school...."*

These fragments reveal together the intricate ways in which remembering processes unfold. They also reveal individual and public memory as a *remembering composite* consisting of elements that are not easily disentangled. Ana-Maria recognized (remembered) herself in Atelier's aesthetic; she identified in the objects and the material arrangements of the place a style, an atmosphere, or a feeling that stemmed from the

communist past,¹³⁰ but also closely related to her experiences of childhood. Particularly in her account of the banal paint line, Ana-Maria captured the sensuousness of sight, a sensuousness that was a response to both the aestheticized materiality of the place and to her own remembering. As a place of everyday encounters, and as framed by Corvin's functional aesthetics, the bar's elements are intended to serve practical purposes. But it is not the practicality of the bar that fascinates my interviewee. Rather, she is hailed by the aesthetically shaped materiality of the place. In the bar she does not simply recognize the past, she also recognizes the social value of the aesthetical treatment of the historical objects. Alexander calls this sort of recognition or awareness "iconic consciousness." He writes, "to be iconically conscious is to understand without knowing, or at least without knowing that one knows. It is to understand by feeling, by contact, by the 'evidence of the senses' rather than the mind."¹³¹

"I don't know how I have it," my interviewee disclosed in reference to the cultural imaginary that allowed her to recognize the materiality of the bar as familiar. Dickinson et al. suggest that cultural sites are part of larger "dreamscapes," which they define as "the full range of memorized images that persons bring with them" from "art, tourist guidebooks, poetry, and cinematic representations."¹³² The Romanian "industrial imaginary" as my interviewee called it, had steadily thickened over the years through the cumulative effects of a variety of rhetorical practices, objects, and events, as well as from a variety of direct experiences.

Some people experienced the communist factories during the time of communism, not only as places of work or as propaganda images frequently broadcasted by the party-controlled public media, but as places encountered during school fieldtrips

and visits to their parents' plants, or during the mandatory secondary school and high school "practical experience" in factories or in smaller mechanical workshops integrated with educational institutions. One of my informants, for instance, stated:

"I still know how to operate the broaching machine. While I was in high school, they took me to a factory. I had the blue working coat, the lunch break, the huge factory hall, noise, chipping smell, and machine grease... The whole nine yards!"

Following 1989, Romanian television stations continue to cite occasionally the propaganda newsreels with factory workers, thus maintaining these images in the present and further influencing the ways communist factories are imagined; a widespread TV Pepsi campaign used archival footage showing the Pepsi bottles as they exited the Romanian factory assembly lines; newscasters and journalists have continually reported on the privatization and the dismantling of former communist factories, featuring fragments of their histories; documentary features, such as *Metrobranding*,¹³³ and more or less fictional films, such as *Visul lui Adalbert* (Adalbert's Dream),¹³⁴ also contribute to the enduring cultural imaginary of Romanian factories. In addition, in their travels throughout the country, people note the contrast between the old and the new factories. One of my informants offered this brief but vivid picture:

"On one hand, you have the abandoned factories... Huge, with many windows, most of them broken, like eyeless faces... and then you have the modern ones, professional-looking and well-groomed."

Some of the old factories have been transformed into artistic spaces¹³⁵ and some people are familiar with them because of images circulated in cyberspace, or because they have attended cultural events located in such places. One of my interviewees, for instance, related that after 1989 a theatre performance gave her the occasion to experience an abandoned factory. Other plants were transformed into offices where

people go to work every day. The industrial imaginary is thus not only the result of more stable¹³⁶ visual representations, but also the cumulative effect of visual representations *and* such more or less transient practices as reporting news, viewing photographs, participating in cultural events, and sharing personal experiences in everyday exchanges. In addition, Alexander's concept of "iconic consciousness" as an experiential and sensuous way of knowing suggests that this cultural imaginary, these dreamscapes that contribute to our remembering in concrete places, is not necessarily constituted through the memorization of a collection of culturally circulated images. It suggests that there is a less conscious aspect to this process and that both "dreamscapes" and places of memory are together parts of our experiential environment.¹³⁷

Individuals' recognitions of the bar as something familiar are supported by this rather eclectic cultural experience of the factory imaginary, but also by personal experiences with public relevance. Ana-Maria's description of the painted line, for instance, represents a visual element that stuck with her in relation to attending school, but the minute detail also represents a style common to many public spaces during communism. Considered in this larger context of both representations and *praxis*, the materiality of the bar may serve as a "memory bridge" rather than indicate a longing for the past.¹³⁸ The perception of the bar is "imbued with remembering,"¹³⁹ where remembering is the result of both personal and collective remembering.

"Where Hipsters Go"

The significance of Atelier does not emanate only from the material historicity of the objects and the rhetorics of remembering that circulate around them. As an everyday place, the bar provides "the material/rhetorical resources of which, in which and through

which, we create our bodies and ourselves.”¹⁴⁰ And yet the bar is no ordinary, everyday place. The bar offers the industrial/communist objects framed by aesthetic practices as material/rhetorical resources for constructing embodied identities. Rhetoric, memory, place and identity are inextricably linked in this place, but these links are more like trajectories that run through Atelier; they are not necessarily bound to it. In addition to offering resources for specific connections between rhetoric, memory, and identity, the bar, as a rhetorical place, is used opportunistically for the enactment of certain identities that imply particular associations with memory. Moreover, the conception of the bar itself can be considered as enacting the identity of its creators—not only a personal identity, but also an identity shared with others.

Boyer contends that nostalgia is “an indexical practice, a mode of inhabiting the lived world,” a discourse “evoked to create and maintain social distinction between groups and between persons.”¹⁴¹ Like the practice of wearing a pioneer scarf, the frequenting of the bar is associated with “hipster” identity. When I mentioned Atelier Mecanic, one of my informants quickly labeled the place: “*That bar where hipsters go.*” The application of the term “hipster” to a cultural style is relatively new in Romania and has surfaced in larger debates of the media only in 2013, during a long series of social protests expressing disagreement and even rage over a government-supported mining project. Organizations supporting the project used the label “hipster” as a negative description applied to the protesters, in an attempt to discredit them. In response, trendy online publications made an effort to define “hipster,” hipster style, and hipster behavior. Their features on “hipsters” usually opened with the understanding and the history of the idea in the United States as explained on such websites as urbandictionary.com and ended

with local definitions gathered in *vox populi*-type interviews. For instance, the Romanian website metropotam.ro, whose mission is to keep its public current with Bucharest's cultural life, published, on October 23, 2013, an article titled "What is the hipster according to Bucharest's residents?" The *vox populi* definitions presented in this article describe the hipster by what s/he does, how s/he dresses, and how s/he behaves. The respondents stated, for example, that "[the hipster is] a cool-urban type, with [a] slightly neglected but calculated look, s/he bikes and frequents underground clubs" and "they are noticeable due to the[ir] unique clothing style." These definitions point to a public that is not hailed by discourse or by certain representations, but is rather constituted through the deployment of a distinctively embodied style.¹⁴² In addition, the descriptions characterize the hipster as "someone who borrows elements of past fashion eras to reinterpret them in his or her own fashion"; they point to hipsters as trendsetters trying to stand against the mainstream; and they stress the hipster as being up-to-date with culture and technology. These portrayals disclose the hipsters' special relationship to time: they make the past an integral part of their style, but at the same time, as up-to-date and trendsetters, they are future-oriented. And once the mainstream catches up with them in the present, they look for new trends in which the past—variations of the past, never the same past or, more exactly, never the same past in the same way—is used again.

In this context, Atelier is a suitable arena for the hipster culture. To paraphrase Warner: set up a bar and see who makes an entrance.¹⁴³ On one hand, the communist past provides a vintage décor compatible with the hipster sensibility for vintage artifacts, thus subsuming the remembering of communism under larger and more varied practices of consumption and under the burgeoning market for vintage products in Bucharest. On the

other hand, the communist past offers, as Corvin put it, a local flavor. Thus the “local” is constructed in relation to the global circulation of modernity that includes hipster culture. As Bartmanski argues, “post-communist nostalgia can be approached as a bottom-up tactic of adjudicating between past local modernization projects and present supranational ones, i.e., forging yet another form of meaningful contiguity.”¹⁴⁴

But Atelier was only a transient place of memory, as the bar’s life was quite short lived. While I was writing this chapter, I read in the Romanian news that Atelier Mecanic had a closing party on January 10th, 2014, after a career of about three years. The announcement of the closing party on Bucharest-tips.com ended mysteriously: “Rumors say it might happen again, in another location in Bucharest.” The bar’s disappearance, accompanied by an allusion to its possible relocation, is an indication of the “inherently nomadic” character of public memory, as the mnemonic landscape is “comprised not of stability but ongoing redistribution or, better still, *re*-remembering.”¹⁴⁵

This ongoing redistribution of memory is an effect of the various activities that sustain the past in the present – and even as many of these practices are transient, they are not inconsequential. The micro-practices that sustain the past in the present are constantly recalibrating the relationships with the past; together they have a “cumulative impact”¹⁴⁶ because they render the past as a presence that is continually subjected to scrutiny. By relating the present to the past people use some aspects of the communist past to sketch some aspects of the present, thus *conceiving of the past as correlative to the present*. By sustaining the past in the present people keep possession of the past and bring the past into the present, i.e., they *generate its presence*. The third and last analytical chapter attends to yet another way of living relationships with the past: pursuing communism.

The pursuit of the communist past reveals remembering as a quest: the past is not simply out there to be correlated with or (re)generated in the present. The past has to be apprehended.

Notes

¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," 8.

² Nancy Wood, "Memory's Remains: Les Lieux De Memoire," *History and Memory* 6, no. 1 (1994): 127.

³ Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," 8.

⁴ Wood, "Memory's Remains: Les Lieux De Memoire," 127.

⁵ For instance, Hutton considers Nora's *Realms of memory* as a "work of deconstruction." Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 152.

⁶ Wolf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 183.

⁷ Many scholars address the problem of a homogenous modernity. Gaonkar, for instance, speaks of alternative modernities, while stressing at the same time the heterogeneity of Western modernity itself. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999). Wittrock argues that there is a "multiplicity of modernities" and "deep-seated cultural and cosmological differences" continue to remain significant. Björn Wittrock, "Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 55. Similarly, Eisenstadt notes "the continual development of multiple modernities in Europe." Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *ibid.*: 11.

⁸ Todorova tackles the question of utilizing Nora's "places of memory" in non-French contexts. However, rather than continuing to struggle with the issue, she eventually chooses to disregard "the fact that the category has become inhabited with a particular meaning in a particular historiography." Maria Todorova, "Blowing up the Past: The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as 'Lieu De Memoire'," in *Remembering Communism. Genres of Representations*, ed. Maria Todorova (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2010), 398.

⁹ Eisenstadt considers the communist Soviet type societies as "the first distinct, ideological, 'alternative' modernities." Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 11. But the relationship between post-communist societies and discourses of modernity is not an easy one. Arnason argues that "the most convenient way to close the book on Communism is to insist on its pre-, anti-, or pseudo-modern character." Johann P Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," *ibid.*: 61. Kornai argues that, given the fact that modernity was mainly understood as a force pushing "in the direction of the expansion of capitalism," the socialist system can be considered "a deviation from the main direction." Janos Kornai, "The Great Transformation of Central Eastern Europe," *Economics of transition* 14, no. 2 (2006): 212.

¹⁰ The fact that modernity “went global” is not understood as a homogenization. Wittrock, for instance, discusses modernity “as a global condition” affecting “our actions, interpretations and habits, across nations.” Wittrock, "Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition," 59. Gaonkar gives a competent and nuanced account of modernity’s travel “from the West to the rest of the World.” Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," 13-18.

¹¹ For Gaonkar, Western modernity is composed by two parallel but mutually influential emergences: social modernity and cultural modernity. In his opinion, “each has a dark side and a bright side.” "On Alternative Modernities," 8-9. Even as Gaonkar does not use these expressions in direct reference to Nora, they aptly capture the spirit of Nora’s view of modernity.

¹² See Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire; and"General Introduction: Between Memory and History."

¹³ Vivian, "'A Timeless Now.' Memory and Repetition," 190.

¹⁴ Zelizer, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," 220.

¹⁵ Reyes, for instance, argues that even though “scholarship on the rhetoric of remembrance is varied and extensive, it tends toward the discursive.” G Mitchell Reyes, "Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials (Review)," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (2011): 595.

¹⁶ Dickinson and Ott, for instance, discuss museums as “experiential landscapes” that mobilize attention “to rhetoric’s materiality as well as its symbolicity.” Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum " 29. Similarly, Zagacki and Gallagher frame museums as “spaces of attention” where “material rhetoric and its enactments” function “to invoke a collective sense of civic and cultural understanding.” Zagacki and Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art," 172.

¹⁷ Dickinson, for instance, asks us “to explore the intersections among the varieties of texts we bring with us to particular spaces.” Greg Dickinson, "The Pleasantville Effect: Nostalgia and the Visual Framing of (White) Suburbia," *Western Journal of Communication* 70, no. 3 (2006): 213. Aden considers memory places “as colliding forces of discourse.” Aden, "When Memories and Discourses Collide: The President's House and Places of Public Memory," 74. See also Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places."

¹⁸ This is a view that Young shares and emphasizes in his analyses of Holocaust memorials. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Blair, for instance, notes the importance of “patterns of visitor reaction” to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. See Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," 283-84. For a more comprehensive review of rhetorical scholarship attending to visitors' responses to public memory places, see Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places," 312.

²⁰ Deleuze writes, “Experience gives us composites. Now the state of the composite does not consist only in uniting elements that differ in kind, but in uniting them in conditions such that these constituent differences *cannot* be grasped in it.” Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 34-35.

²¹ As a contrast to my use of “sustaining the past,” I will offer as an example Schwartz’s work on Washington. Schwartz was interested in the factors that sustained the memory of George Washington from 1865 to 1920, as a way to attend to the transformations inherent in remembering process. Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington."

²² David Middleton, "Succession and Change in the Sociocultural Use of Memory: Building-in the Past in Communicative Action," *Culture & Psychology* 8, no. 1 (2002).

²³ Marita Sturken, "Memory, Consumerism and Media: Reflections on the Emergence of the Field," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 74.

²⁴ In his pop-up book *The Golden Age for children*, Constantinescu explains, “The political organization of the education system was structured as follows; Falocns of the Fatherland (4-7 years old), The Pioneer Organization (8-14 years old), and UTC – the Union of Communist Youth (15-26 years old). One of their most important functions was propagandistic, and this was manifested on occasions such as August 23 (National Day), May 1 (Workers’ Day) and November 7 (Victory of the Soviet Revolution Day). Ștefan Constantinescu, *The Golden Age for Children* (Stockholm: The Romanian Institute of Stockholm, 2008), 14.

²⁵ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett performs a quite comprehensive analysis of the ways in which people’s domestic interiors are filled with things that are “profoundly meaningful through the life span.” She also contributes with a typology of these significant objects: material companions, souvenirs and mementos, memory objects, collectables, and ensembles. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader* (1989).

²⁶ Wang and Brokmeier make a very compelling argument for considering autobiographical memory “as an active construction embedded in a social weave of dialogues that are negotiated not only between an individual and his or her immediate social environment (parents, peers and significant others), but also, equally important,

between the individual and the larger culture milieu.” Qi Wang and Jens Brockmeier, "Autobiographical Remembering as Cultural Practice: Understanding the Interplay between Memory, Self and Culture," *Culture & Psychology* 8, no. 1 (2002): 47.

²⁷ Ana and Adi Voicu Vlad, "Metrobranding: A Love Story between Men and Objects," (2010).

²⁸ Daphne Berdahl, "'(N) Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things," *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 193.

²⁹ Maria Todorova, "Introduction: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: : Berghahn Books, 2010), 3.

³⁰ Kimberly K Smith, "Mere Nostalgia: Notes on a Progressive Paratheory," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3, no. 4 (2000): 515-16.

³¹ These are objects that were part of the material culture during communism. “the fish on the TV”, for instance, describes one of the objects commonly found in Romanians’ house - a bibelot representing a colorful fish made of glass.

³² Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia* (London: Continuum, 2010), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁴ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

³⁵ Boyer writes, “we should regard Eastern European nostalgia always also as a *postimperial symptom*, a symptom of the increasingly manic need in Western Europe to fix Eastern Europe in the past. (...) In this postimperial environment, the need for Eastern Europe as a *still lesser* node, a space that Western Europe can still suppose itself to dominate, has been vital.” Dominic Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

³⁶ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York Free Press, 1979), 8.

³⁷ Boym attaches to the sense of nostalgia the desire to restore the past. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*.

³⁸ David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* (1975): 2.

³⁹ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xviii.

⁴⁰ Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*, 10.

⁴¹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 65.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 65-71.

⁴³ Casey, *Remembering*, 148.

⁴⁴ My interviewee explained that her colleague and her colleague's friends wanted to keep private the communist party in private because in the context of their ages (late forties, mid-fifties) and of their social and semi-public status (mid- and top-managers in state and private institutions), such "fooling around" would be judged as inappropriate in public.

⁴⁵ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁷ As performances, these reenactments "[execute a copy] of an original that does not exist, except as a retrospective understanding." Joseph R. Roach, "Performance Studies," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt & Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 457.

⁴⁸ Todorova, "Introduction: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back," 2.

⁴⁹ Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life," 28.

⁵⁰ The expression "wooden language" has been used to designate the discursive style of communist propaganda (during the communist regime). Betea argues that the "wooden language" is the propagandistic jargon used by communists that was subsequently disseminated in all areas of life through the media and the education system. Lavinia Betea, "Comunicare Și Discurs În "Limba De Lemn" a Regimului Communist [Communication and Discourse in the "Wooden Language" of the Communist Regime]," *Argumentum, Caietele Seminarului de Logică discursivă, Teoria argumentării și Retorică*, no. 3 (2004). Slama-Cazacu defines the wooden language "as a sub-system of a language" comprising lexical elements but also phraseological units with a fixed, precise meaning that are used in the context of a certain "authority." This language is used in a stereotypical-dogmatic manner, as an expression of ideology. Tatiana Slama-Cazacu, *Stratageme Comunicative Și Manipulare [Communicative Stratagems and Manipulation]* (Iași: Polirom, 2000).

⁵¹ I allude here to Goffman's idea of presentation in everyday life. More exactly, he differentiates between performers who are "fully taken in" by their own acts and performers who have no belief in their own acts. In this case however, to be "fully taken in" by their own speaking also integrates the notion of habit memory. Erving Goffman,

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 10-12.

⁵² Betea, *Mentalitati Si Remanente Comuniste [Communist Mentalities and Remanences]*, 159-63.

⁵³ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 88.

⁵⁴ Stormer, "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mnesis," 44.

⁵⁵ On June 18, 2012, the online edition of *Nature* magazine disclosed that significant portions of Ponta's PhD dissertation were simply copied from works that he did not reference. Subsequently, the plagiarism accusation was taken up in the international and the Romanian media.

⁵⁶ Ion Iliescu, as I noted in my first chapter, was one of the high ranked communists who, after the Revolution, held the Romanian Presidential office for a total of 8 years. He is regarded as one of the most significant examples of communism continuity in the political realm.

⁵⁷ Robert Hopper, "The Taken-for-Granted," *Human Communication Research* 7, no. 3 (1981): 196.

⁵⁸ Lloyd F Bitzer, "Aristotle's Enthymeme Revisited," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45, no. 4 (1959): 407.

⁵⁹ "Informative notes" are the reports written by people collaborating with the Romanian secret police during the communist regime. They are part of the secret police files located in an archive administrated by the National Council for the Study of Secret Police Archives.

⁶⁰ This informative note alludes to the fact that private cars' circulation was restricted in communist Romania. Constantinescu writes that beginning with the 80s, "car traffic was strictly limited on Sundays" as cars were allowed on the roads only every other Sunday, "as determined by whether or not the registration plate ended in an even or an odd number." Constantinescu, *The Golden Age for Children*, 7.

⁶¹ This note alludes to the energy shortages in the 80s. Constantinescu writes, "In 1982 Ceaușescu decided to pay off all the foreign debt occasioned by the forced industrialization of the 1970s. The massive exports and minimization of imports had as a consequence the necessity of the introduction of austerity measures, something that it was felt in all domanins, in particular, in the energy and food sectors." Ibid., 18. Georgescu writes about the "chronic power and heating cuts" and notes, "the use of refrigerators and washing machines is officially discouraged and coal irons, hand mixers and oil lamps are considered better than modern energy-consuming electric appliances." Vlad Georgescu, "Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism," *East European Politics & Societies* 2, no. 1 (1987): 79-80.

⁶² According to Ioanid, in 1982, Tudoran upset the authorities with a story in which he accused several Romanian authors of plagiarism. The story was never published, and a year later Tudoran resigned from the Romanian Communist Party. He required the authorities to grant him a passport so he could leave the country with his family. In 1985, after years of opposition and a 40-day hunger strike, he emigrated to the United States. Radu Ioanid, "O Punere În Context [the Context]," in *Eu, Fiul Lor: Dosar De Securitate [I, Their Son: Secret Police File]*, ed. Dorin Tudoran (București: Polirom, 2010). Deletant has a slightly different version of the story. He argues that Tudoran "felt unable to accept the imposition from the Party in July 1981 of the new President of the Writers' Union, Dumitru Radu Popescu. After resigning from the Council of the Union, Tudoran was dismissed as an editor of the cultural weekly *Luceafărul*. Consequently, he resigned from the Communist Party. Unable to find a publishing house willing to accept his work, he applied in April 1984 for a passport to emigrate with his family. His request was ignored and a year later he embarked on a hunger-strike (on 15 April). On 26 April, a petition signed by, among others, Vladimir Bukovski, Eugene Ionescu and Eduard Kuznetsov, was published in the Paris press. Three months later, on the eve of consideration of the renewal of Romania's most favoured nation status by the US Congress, both Tudoran and the dissident priest Gheorghe Calciu were granted exit visas by the Romanian authorities." Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1995), 195, n. 70.

⁶³ Deletant explains, "the award of a passport to a Romanian citizen was a privilege, not a right." *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989*, 338.

⁶⁴ Miruna Runcan, "The Human Touch—on the Evolution of the Socially Engaged Theatre," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai-Dramatica*, no. 1 (2013): 21.

⁶⁵ Random Romanian family names.

⁶⁶ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁸ Cristina Iancu, "Critical Detachment and Post-Brechtianism: Gianina Cărbunariu and the Text of the Performance," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai-Dramatica*, no. 1 (2013): 121.

⁶⁹ Barbara A Biesecker, "Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 124.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷¹ Ciobanu, "Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission," 319.

⁷² See Lavinia Stan, "Reckoning with the Communist Past in Romania: A Scorecard," *ibid.* 65, no. 1 (2013); Mark S Ellis, "Purging the Past: The Current State of Lustration Laws in the Former Communist Bloc," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 59, no. 4 (1996).

⁷³ Stan, "Reckoning with the Communist Past in Romania: A Scorecard," 136.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Monica Ciobanu, "Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission," *ibid.* 61, no. 2 (2009): 321.

⁷⁷ Lavinia Stan, "Reckoning with the Communist Past in Romania: A Scorecard," *ibid.* 65, no. 1 (2013): 136.

⁷⁸ Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "The Devil's Confessors: Priests, Communists, Spies, and Informers," *East European Politics & Societies* 19, no. 4 (2005): 658.

⁷⁹ See also Ciobanu, "Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission," 317.

⁸⁰ Numerous authors note the scarcity of dissident attitudes in communist Romania and, more importantly, that dissidence was mostly an isolated, personal choice that did not result in significant opposition movements to the regime. See, for instance, Irina Culic, "The Strategies of Intellectuals: Romania under Communist Rule in Comparative Perspective," in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999). Cristina Petrescu, "Romania," in *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe. Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition*, ed. Detlef Pollack and Jan Wilegohs (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004). Consequently, the few Romanian dissidents are revered as paragons of morality or, as Tismăneanu put it, they are "argonauts of dignity." Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics. Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), x.

⁸¹ Ciobanu, "Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission," n. 13.

⁸² In 2010, Dorin Tudoran made public, in a book, 9.852 pages from his secret police file. As suggested in Tudoran's introduction, the book title, *I, their son*, conveys the idea that once he was put under surveillance, Tudoran lost his identity as a private person. Dorin Tudoran, *Eu, Fiul Lor: Dosar De Securitate [I, Their Son: Secret Police File]* (București: Polirom, 2010).

⁸³ LaCapra notes, "When it is fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of

traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself—an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscription.” Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 92, n. 17.

⁸⁴ For a complex account of the meaning of “independent theatre” and its emergence, see Iulia Popovici, "Independent Theatre in Romania – a Short History," in *Eastern European Performing Arts Dictionary. A project of the Eastern European Performing Arts Platform* (Forthcoming).

⁸⁵ Runcan, "The Human Touch—on the Evolution of the Socially Engaged Theatre," 15.

⁸⁶ Runcan and Buricea-Mlinarcic explain that the “museum-like” attitude has “profound roots” in “first, the aesthetical canon of Romanian theatre, settled in the last three decades before communism failed; second, the contextual allergy to realism and social-political implication, shared both by artists and audiences in the late 80s, due to a prolonged exposition of artistic environment to the dogmatic and propagandistic discourses.” Miruna and C. C. Buricea-Mlinarcic Runcan, "Everyday Life Drama: An Interdisciplinary Project in Progress," *ibid.*, no. 2 (2008): 73. Popescu also argues that “many established directors, actors, and set designers continued to follow aesthetics they shaped under the constraints of the communist regime’s censorship and defended the values of both Stanislavsky’s acting system and the model of large state theaters’ receipt of 90-percent funding by public sources, a castle where the director stands as a central, authoritarian figure and his major actors become darlings of the media and the city.” Marian Popescu, "In Cinderella's Shoes. Romanian Theater Twenty Years after Communism," *Theater* 39, no. 2 (2009): 15. On the struggle of the Romanian theatrical circles with the legacy of the communist era, see also Noel Witts, "Negative Utopia: Reflections on Theatre in Romania after Ceaucescu," *Performance Research: On Risk* 1, no. 2 (1997).

⁸⁷ Runcan, "Everyday Life Drama: An Interdisciplinary Project in Progress," 75.

⁸⁸ Miruna Runcan, "The Human Touch—on the Evolution of the Socially Engaged Theatre," *ibid.*, no. 1 (2013): 15.

⁸⁹ Cristina Iancu, "Critical Detachment and Post-Brechtianism: Gianina Cărbunariu and the Text of the Performance," *ibid.*: 112.

⁹⁰ The literary magazine *Luceafărul* was (and still is) the Romanian Writers’ Union publication. The magazine was established in 1958 and later became a communist propaganda instrument. See Alex. Ștefănescu, "La O Nouă Lectură: Mircea Dinescu [a New Interpretation: Mircea Dinescu]," *România literară*, no. 48 (2000), http://www.romlit.ro/mircea_dinescu. In Romanian, *luceafăr* means morning star. *Luceafărul* is also the title of one of the most well-known and appreciated poems written

by the most revered Romanian poet, Mihai Eminescu, who, in his poem's title made reference to both the planet Venus and Lucifer.

⁹¹ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, 78.

⁹² Debra Hawhee, "Rhetorics, Bodies, and Everyday Life," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2006): 157.

⁹³ Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania," 20.

⁹⁴ Among others, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*; Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*; Fredric Jameson, "Nostalgia for the Present," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (1989).

⁹⁵ Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, no. 23 (2006): 7.

⁹⁶ Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," 63.

⁹⁷ Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia—a Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 3 (1988): 227.

⁹⁸ See among others, Tony Judt who considers nostalgia "an older form of political discourse" and who admonishes Eastern Europeans for misremembering and denying the communist experience. Tony Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (1992). See also, for instance, Vladimir Tismaneanu and Dorin Tudoran, "The Bucharest Syndrome," *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 1 (1993).

⁹⁹ Imagination here is used in the spirit Appadurai speaks of "the imagination as a social practice," where imagination can use the past and the nostalgia to do a certain form of work – "in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice." Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," 28.

¹⁰¹ See www.corvincristian.com

¹⁰² In the sense Lee and LiPuma, for instance, talk about the circulation of three social imaginaries that are crucial to Western modernity: the public sphere, the citizen-state and the market. However, one can imagine that nostalgia, as the disease of modernity, is equally part of a cultural imaginary that circulates with the others. Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002).

¹⁰³ Appadurai argues that the technological transformations of the contemporary world affect the intensity and frequency of interactions between cultures. These dramatic transformations also affect our visions on the past. He writes, "The past is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios." Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, Boyer's account. Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania."

¹⁰⁶ Among others, it comprises the old ruins of the Princely Palace (The Royal Court) of Wallachia

¹⁰⁷ See Liliana and Mariana Nae Dumitrache, "Urban Regeneration and Affective Connections to Place in Bucharest City Centre," *Analale Universitatii Bucuresti. Seria Geografie* (2013); Emanuela Grama, "Letters, Plans, and Walls: Architects and Archaeologists in the 1960s Bucharest," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27, no. 2 (2009).

¹⁰⁸ Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," 1.

¹⁰⁹ Dumitrache, "Urban Regeneration and Affective Connections to Place in Bucharest City Centre."

¹¹⁰ According to Nae and Turnock, a number of 10.000 people had to be displaced in 2004-2005, during a program of renovation, infrastructure modification, and pedestrianization. Mariana Nae and David Turnock, "The New Bucharest: Two Decades of Restructuring," *Cities* 28, no. 2 (2011): 218.

¹¹¹ Ioan, for instance, drew attention to the lack of real democratic debate in connection to Bucharest's public spaces and the public use of urban space. Augustin Ioan, "The Peculiar History of (Post)Communist Public Places and Spaces: Bucharest as a Case Study," in *The Post-Socialist City. Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism*, ed. Kiril Stanilov (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 310.

¹¹² Meinig explains that depending on how one looks, there could be ten versions of the same scene: landscape as nature, habitat, artifact, history, system, wealth, place, and aesthetic. Donald W Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," *The interpretation of ordinary landscapes: Geographical essays* (1979).

¹¹³ Richard H Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997): 663.

¹¹⁴ Dumitrache, "Urban Regeneration and Affective Connections to Place in Bucharest City Centre," 192.

¹¹⁵ Landscape here is understood "as the familiar domain of our dwelling" that is "with us," "a part of us" as a consequence of our "living in it." Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993): 61.

¹¹⁶ Ioan, for instance, contends that Lipscani Street, the main axis of the old center, is "picturesque and eclectic," but these two qualifiers can be easily applied to the totality of the area for reasons I hope have become obvious from my description. Augustin Ioan, "Urban Policies and the Politics of Public Space in Bucharest," in *The Urban Mosaic of Post-Socialist Europe: Space, Institutions and Policy*, ed. Sasha Tsenkova; Zorica Nedovic-Budic (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2006), 339.

¹¹⁷ Judt stressed the role of communist regimes "in the modern transformation of Eastern Europe." Industrialization, urbanization, and literacy programs are among the modernization efforts undertaken during communism. Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," 111.

¹¹⁸ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that "whereas the souvenir authenticates the past and is a tool for remembering, the collectible is authenticated by the past." Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," 332.

¹¹⁹ See http://www.corvincristian.com/en/design-works/69-atelier_mecanic

¹²⁰ Here I am remembering Edbauer's definition of public rhetorics. Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," 9.

¹²¹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum".

¹²² Zagacki and Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art."

¹²³ Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places," 315.

¹²⁴ Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," 6.

¹²⁵ Özyürek observes, "at the turn of the twenty first century, nostalgia privatizes and, by doing so, commodifies images and concepts once seen as public and thus nonmarketable by previous capitalists around the world." Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

¹²⁶ Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 15.

¹²⁷ Ahmed talks here about affect more generally. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 120.

¹²⁸ Here I am inspired—heuristically—by Stewart’s astute distinction between “the (active) production of ‘country crafts’ and their (mere) consumption of their (passive) reproduction as empty styles.” Stewart, "Nostalgia—a Polemic," 234.

¹²⁹ In his anthropological work on the Romanian working class in postsocialism, Kideckel points to a constellation of factors that work together to “submerge worker experience, blur particular lives into an undifferentiated mass, and rob workers of their historical variation, not to mention their voice and agency.” David A. Kideckel, *Getting by in Postsocialist Romania. Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 30.

¹³⁰ Casey explains that sometimes “we do recognize some things precisely as *stemming from* the past.” In recognizing, he argues, “the reference to the past is built right into the presentness of the experience—is part of its very content and is not inferred or posited, much less experienced separately.” Casey, *Remembering*, 123.

¹³¹ Jeffrey C Alexander, "Iconic Consciousness: The Material Feeling of Meaning," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26, no. 5 (2008): 782.

¹³² Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum " 29-30.

¹³³ Vlad, "Metrobranding." By the same authors, see also "Victoria," (2010). In addition, Alexandru Belc, "8 Martie [March 8]," (2012).

¹³⁴ Gabriel Achim, "Visul Lui Adalbert [Adalbert's Dream]," (2011). See also, Tudor Giurgiu, "Despre Oameni Și Melci [of Snails and Men]," (2012).

¹³⁵ For instance, the former factory of paintbrushes from Cluj was transformed into a collective space for contemporary arts. While the space continues to bare the name “The Paintbrush Factory,” it hosts theater, contemporary dance, visual visual arts, and music events. In fact, Gianina Cărbunariu’s performance, *X mm from Y km* was produced in this space.

¹³⁶ I am perfectly aware that, given the dynamic nature of memory, there are no such things as “stable” visual representations. However, visual representations fixed in cultural artifacts such as cinema, tourist guides, books and so on are different in kind from some of the transient practices that I name here, such as having a glimpse of a factory in ruin while going by car somewhere else, or reading in passing a news report, or casually examining a photograph in the cyberspace. Here, I do not argue that one

category is more important than the other, but I want to signal that both kinds of categories participate in our remembering processes.

¹³⁷ To some extent, this is related to Landsberg's argument about mediated memories. Landsberg argues, "mass culture makes particular memories more widely available, so that people who have no 'natural' claim to them might nevertheless incorporate them into their own archive of experience." Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, 9.

¹³⁸ Dominik Bartmanski, "Successful Icons of Failed Time: Rethinking Post-Communist Nostalgia," *Acta sociologica* 54, no. 3 (2011): 213.

¹³⁹ Casey, *Remembering*; *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," 6.

¹⁴¹ Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania," 20.

¹⁴² To be hip," Warner writes, "is to fear the mass circulation that feeds on hipness and which, in turn, makes it possible; while to be normal (in the 'mainstream') is to have anxiety about the counterpublics that define themselves through performances so distinctively embodied that one cannot lasso them back into general circulation without risking the humiliating exposure of inauthenticity. Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 73.

¹⁴³ Warner argues that a counter/public is "poetic world making." In other words, "all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape, and attempting to realize that world through address." He contends that a discourse or a performance "goes out in search of confirmation" that a public for its world exists. Warner's exact words are: "Run it up the flagpole and see who salutes. Put on a show, and see who shows up." *ibid.*, 81-82.

¹⁴⁴ Bartmanski, "Successful Icons of Failed Time: Rethinking Post-Communist Nostalgia," 221.

¹⁴⁵ Vivian, "'A Timeless Now.' Memory and Repetition," 190.

¹⁴⁶ Burawoy and Verdery, "Introduction," 1.

PURSUING THE PAST

“All of history has become a sensitive area – sensitive for everyone.”
Pierre Nora

*“I am pursuing the past wherever it takes me.
The past does not come to me; I must go to it.”*
Greg Dening

Introduction

Collective memory scholars have increasingly chosen to emphasize memory as it materializes in practices. As Terdiman writes, memory resides “not in perceiving consciousness but *in the material*: in the practices and institutions of social or psychic life.”¹ This focus on memory as practice not only allows scholars to view memory as an activity, but also enables a rethinking of the connections between individual and collective memory. Olick argues that attention to practices of memory reframes “the antagonism between individualist and collectivist approaches to memory more productively as a matter of moments in a dynamic process.”² In addition, this perspective enables scholars to describe the ways “in which past and present are intertwined without reifying a mystical group mind.”³

To consider the practices of memory also means to reexamine the habitation of memory, to ask: where does memory exist or reside? For scholars in sociology, when it is viewed as a social action, memory “cannot be accounted for by reference to mental processes alone.”⁴ Thus, memory is not located in the (individual) mind, but is “always simultaneously individual and social.”⁵ For cultural studies scholars, an emphasis on practices questions “the notion that memory resides in objects in some way.”⁶ For instance, Sturken examines the “kitschification of memory” and the purchasing of kitsch

souvenirs as activities that participate in “the tourism of history.” She describes these activities as they join larger cultural practices invested in “the concept of innocence” and relate to “a culture of comfort in the United States.”⁷ Thus, the meaning of memories does not simply reside in the snow globes or the teddy bears that she offers as examples, but in a complex web of cultural practices that work together to lend a particular signification to the remembering accomplished via these objects.

Moreover, to attend to practices of remembering avoids the risk of anthropomorphizing memory or its products (such as archives, places of memory, museums, monuments, and so on).⁸ In other words, the notion of practices compels us to acknowledge that mnemonic products “gain their reality”⁹ only through mnemonic practices carried out by conscious agents.

Though not significantly taken up by the majority of early rhetoric and public address scholars, remembering practices have more recently been considered within the purview of the discipline under the condition that critics attend “to their character as meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential.”¹⁰ In the area of public memory, practices are taken up in various ways that range from attention to a speech as an instantiation of remembering practices to the investigation of more sophisticated connections between the rhetorical construction of memory places and larger cultural practices. Browne, for instance, (narrowly) understands memorializing as a “textual practice” that is significant by virtue of “its public and persuasive functions.”¹¹ Consequently, for him the popular oration is “the most explicit” form of memory. The analysis of the minute rhetorical (textual) operations in Daniel Webster’s *Plymouth Rock Oration* allows Browne to conclude that “public memory is reflected in and projected by

discursive convention.”¹² In his account, remembering is integrated with rhetoric, which is understood as a particularized kind of practice.¹³

Expanding the horizon of public memory, Blair and Michel address the AIDS quilt “as a harbinger of practices” situated “in the cultural milieu of twentieth century public commemorative building practices.”¹⁴ In their account, the practices involved in the creation of and the responses to the quilt trouble the traditional boundaries between contexts of reception and contexts of invention.¹⁵ They also challenge the neat separation between public and private.¹⁶ More significantly, the authors understand remembering as it is carried out through a variety of rhetorically significant practices that are different than writing or delivering a speech. Amongst other practices, they mention naming the dead, departing from the commemorative genre, democratizing representation, and allowing the quilt to be perpetually open. In a similar way, Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti historicized remembering practices by examining “today’s creation of spontaneous public shrines” through an analogy with “mourning practices of the nineteenth century.”¹⁷ This analogy also serves them to demonstrate how notions of public and private are blurred in the context of the public tragedies of Oklahoma City and Dunblane.¹⁸ As a last illustration, Dickinson provides a more nuanced account of practices and the way they are meaningful in the process of remembering. He examines the intersection between practices of consumption and memory and the role that their conjoined actions play in “creating meaningful identities.”¹⁹ Moreover, he demonstrates how these relations are inflected by three modalities of seeing and their associated practices. In his account, the automobile glance renders Old Pasadena as a unified site of nostalgia. But the speed of

the pedestrian and the even slower speed of the shopper break down the unity of the site, revealing its “fragmentation and proliferation of nostalgias.”²⁰

While for Browne the work of remembering is carried out within the limits of a finished speech, the other examples expand the rhetoric of remembering beyond discursive practices. They also examine the ways in which the meaningfulness and the consequentiality of memorializing discourses, events, objects, and practices emerge from their contact and interaction with a broad array of human activities. As Wagner argued, meaning “cannot justifiably be detached from the events and actions through which it is constituted, or from the modes of its production.”²¹

Webster’s oration, the AIDS quilt, the public shrines in Oklahoma City and Dunblane, and Old Pasadena participate in what Aleida Assmann called “active cultural memory” or “the canon.” Assmann defines the canon as “the actively circulated memory that keeps the past present.”²² The elements of the canon are separated “from the rest as charged with the highest meaning and value.” They stand in opposition to the archive, or “the cultural reference memory” that comprises “the passively stored memory.”²³ But how are the canon and the archive constituted? What are the practices that give meaning to and separate the elements of the canon and the archive?

For the most part, rhetorical scholars are drawn to elements of “the canon” because the participants in the culture have already selected them as meaningful – through practices of circulation, contestation, and veneration. However, as Vivian noted, public memories “are engendered by something distinctly *un*-public: the disparate memory work of collectivities and even individuals.”²⁴ Although I suspect that some of these practices cannot be firmly qualified as “distinctly un-public,” I think that memory

studies can benefit from the examination of the micro activities, actions, practices, or motions that lead not only to the construction of public memories as such, but also to their transformation over time. In other words, I think that much is to be learned from remembering practices that flow with and in the everyday life, because these practices have the potential to continually transform memories. By “transformation” I mean not only the fluidity of public memories’ meaning over time or the more or less temporary inflections that public memories can gain when pressed by particular contexts.

“Transformation” is also meant to comprise the oscillation between the canon and the archive. In other words, the transformation of public memory includes the series of motions and activities by which certain discourses, events, objects, and practices achieve various cultural conditions. How do public memories achieve a status that requires reverence and how do they fall from grace? What are the activities that move them from dim storing spaces onto well-lit public pedestals?

The third theme that emerged from my analysis of the ways in which communism is remembered in Romanians’ everyday life enters into conversation with the theoretical problematics, tensions, and questions raised above. This theme, *pursuing the communist past*, comprises the activities and practices that move people toward or close to the communist past. While in Romania, I noted that in addition to establishing relations to the communist past (relating the present to the past) and to a series of activities that sustain or integrate this past into the immediate present (sustaining the past in the present), there are a number of ways in which people purposefully follow or pay attention to the communist past.

The activities of memory are largely thought to be acts that are directly derived from remembering, a view which presupposes that the past is already known – whether via direct experience or mediation – and that it only needs to be recalled or recounted. For instance, while his list remains open, Olick argues that the practices of collective memory “include reminiscence, recall, representation, commemoration, celebration, regret, renunciation, disavowal, denial, rationalization, excuse, acknowledgment, and many others.”²⁵ Similarly, Campbell writes, “We do not only recognize, remember, forget, recall, memorize and relive, but we also recount, commemorate, reminisce, remind, and testify.”²⁶ Olick’s inventory includes both activities connected with remembering and possible attitudes toward remembering. Campbell’s two series suggest that we do some activities of remembering on our own, while others we perform in community. However, regardless of the nuances of remembering that both authors attempt to illustrate, the catalogues of activities they offer assume that the past exists somewhere out there and only needs to be articulated via these practices in order to become a memory.²⁷ But what if the past is not already in memory? Or what if the past that we have in memory is not enough? What if the past has to be pursued? “To remember is,” Ricoeur insists, “to have a memory or to set off in search of a memory.”²⁸

Conceptual categories

Pursuing the communist past comprises objects, events, practices, and discourses that exemplify this quest for memory. Pursuing the communist past comprises four categories: buying communist food products, audiencing communism, interest in communism, and communism as occupation. All four categories emphasize memory as a mode of searching (for), a task which requires “research rather than recuperation.”²⁹

Warner argues that merely paying attention to texts constitutes publics and that “the cognitive quality” of the attention is not as important as “the mere fact of active uptake.” For him, attention means engaging with the text in the ways required by the particular textual modality at play: hearing, seeing, reading, or being present for it.³⁰ The categories subsumed under the concept of pursuing the communist past suggest however that “paying attention” to discourses, objects, events, and practices can involve different modalities, intensities, durations, or resources. Pursuing the communist past is a practice by which remembering is manifested as a wide-ranging investment of attention into discourses, events, objects, and practices recalling the past.

The first two categories, buying communist food products and audiencing communism refer to people’s pursuit of the communist past by consuming, searching out, being present for or paying attention to events, discourses, objects, or practices that stimulate the remembrance of communism. Interest in communism and communism as occupation refer to people’s pursuit of communism by devoting themselves to activities, projects, or hobbies that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about the communist past. Unlike “interest in the communist past,” “communism as occupation” involves some sort of paid work. Between the former two categories and the latter two there is a difference of “seriousness” that emerged from the ways in which my informants talked about their investments. Being interested in communism was always regarded as a serious preoccupation with the past, while buying communist food was considered nostalgic, that is, a sentimental, pleasurable activity. Audiencing cultural productions recalling communism mediates somewhat between the two, given that some productions tend toward a documentary, and thus “serious” stance, while, other productions are viewed as

playful and “purely” for entertainment. This division, however, is questioned and to a certain extent reconciled by what these four practices have in common: paying attention to, searching for, and moving toward the communist past in the varying forms or states through which it makes itself available. Pursuing the communist past thus expresses the idea that the past can be encountered in both sensuous and thoughtful fashions and that these two ways of knowing and experiencing with their attached meanings are “juxtaposed and jumbled.”³¹

Consuming Communist Food Products

Consuming communist food products records instances when people actively search for and consume food products that remind them of communism in some way or another. Buying communist food products is inscribed in a broader array of practices connected with the consumption of “communist brands.” “Communist brands” are those brands that were produced by the communist economy, outlived the fall of communism and continue to have a life in the new economic context brought about by the change of the political regime.

The survival of certain “communist brands” in the current free-market economy and the consumption associated with them is the antipode of the “mourning for production”³² that might be read into, for instance, *Atelier Mecanic* (Mechanical Workshop) or the documentary *Metrobranding*.³³ The consumption of the former communist brands acknowledges these products’ successful and profitable endurance through both the fall of communism and the competition of the present-day competitive market.³⁴ The existence of these products and the consumption practices associated with them prove, to some extent, the economic potential of some portion of the past. Contrary

to normative remembering imperatives, which require that the present be purged of the communist past, the capitalist circulation of former communist brands suggests that the bygone era is still worthy of and useful for the present. Communist goods serve as material signs that validate a respectable rather than a chastised continuity with the past. To consume communist food products or communist brands more generally is to pursue this valuable dimension of the communist past.

In this context of consumption, food products have a unique significance. As anthropologists and sociologists argue, strong relationships exist between food and memory. Among the issues investigated by scholars interested in these relationships, Holtzman mentions “contexts of remembering and forgetting through food,” “dietary change as a socially charged marker of epochal shifts,” and “the role of food in various forms of nostalgia.”³⁵ To some extent, seeking food products that remind one of communism is consciously embraced as a nostalgic expression. As Maradona stated,

“Yes, I clearly have nostalgia. Well, first of all, I always prefer Pepsi to Coca-Cola. And then, when I go shopping, I search for foods that remind me of communism, I always buy those [instead of others].”

The taste, smell, and texture of food can serve to both trigger memories of past experiences and to delimit food preferences in the present.³⁶ In pursuing food products reminiscent of communism, people do not only attempt to relieve or retrieve the past in a sensuous way. Nor do they simply express a favorable, sentimental orientation toward the past. There is a celebration of continuity in the consumption of communist food brands that performs, in turn, a repositioning of these brands in relation to both economy and memory. The Pepsi brand mentioned by Maradona and other interviewees is illustrative in this respect. While it was the only Western brand of soda available on the communist

market (because it was locally produced), Pepsi was scarce during communism; the Pepsi bottles were not readily available for mass consumption in regular grocery stores.

Consuming Pepsi during communism, in fact, constituted a rare privilege, as it was primarily found in restaurants dedicated to foreign tourists to which Romanians did not have easy access. Remembering this context, some Romanians continue to affectively invest in Pepsi in the present as the drink is rendered as an object of intense desire that has accumulated over time.³⁷

The positioning of Pepsi and other “communist” brands alongside the myriad products available through the present-day capitalist market is tied to memories of the economy of scarcity in which it once existed. Its competitive advantage is thus precisely its link to the past. More exactly, the advantage resides in the fact that people already had an affective investment in it. The marketing campaigns for these brands capitalize on these affective investments while at the same time intensifying their circulation and re-circulation.³⁸ For instance,³⁹ in 2011, Pepsi was marketed under the tagline “Și ieri. Și azi” (Yesterday, as well as today). On TV, the 30-second video for the campaign presented archival⁴⁰ images of a Romanian factory assembly line for Pepsi bottles. The caption read: “Constanța. Munca Factory.⁴¹ Romanian television report, 1968.” The musical soundtrack was comprised of the first stanza of a rather famous children’s song from the communist period.⁴² While the image of the communist Pepsi bottle on an old-style photographic paper made its appearance, a voiceover pushed the song into the background to announce: “Pepsi-cola, in pubs this summer.” The voiceover was fashioned in a manner reminiscent of the commercials created during communism. To conclude the video, a stamp with the campaign’s tagline, “Yesterday, as well as today,”

was placed in the bottom-right corner of the photo representing the Pepsi bottle. As part of the campaign, Pepsi Romania decided to issue a limited number of 250 ml bottles (as opposed to their regular 330 ml containers) which reproduced, they claimed, the ones used during communism.

The campaign, however, did not simply create a market or a public for the product by addressing people in this particular way. As Lundberg argues, “texts do not create publics *ex nihilo*.” The public heeds this Pepsi commercial because its “text” trades “on investments that though manifest in the text, also precede and organize a public’s attention to it.”⁴³ It can also be said that, to a certain extent, a public already affectively invested called for these specific ways of promoting the brand. Furthermore, it speaks to a public already invested in the history of Pepsi lived during communism as a symbol of (yearning for) capitalism and to a public able to recognize and respond to the stylistic cues (the voiceover, the tune, the old photographic paper) that evoke the past. Finally, it speaks to the participants in a culture that was already engaging in such practices as chatting about communism (including exchanges about consumption during communism), preserving and circulating images of communist objects (including, for instance bottles of milk and soda),⁴⁴ consuming books and news pieces about everyday life during communism or about the former communist brands,⁴⁵ and so on. The Pepsi campaign is thus able to imagine the public in a certain way because of these already-existing practices and investments; at the same time, addressing its public in this particular way, Pepsi constitutes its public. This points to “the chicken-and-egg circularity” of the idea of “public,”⁴⁶ but, more importantly, it points to the recursive circulation of rhetorical themes, memories, and affects between the spheres of everyday

exchange and the more obvious public spheres of intensely mediated discourses, events, objects, and practices.

The examples detailed above speak of a remembering that is supported by the existence of food products that offer a kind of palatable bridge between the present and the past. This mode of remembering evolves around a material and sensory presence and is connected to, but is also different from, the nostalgia for the natural, better tastes of the past that have vanished with the rise of the new economic environment. This latter mode of remembering evolves around a material and sensory absence. While in the previous illustration there is the illusion that nostalgia can be somewhat appeased through consumption, the loss mourned in the following account has no apparent fix. The next interview excerpt offers a contrast to buying communist food products by stressing the impossibility of purchasing food as tasteful as it used to be in the past:

“I remember communism, for instance, when I go to the farmers’ market. Well, sure, now you have this abundance [of products on the market], but you cannot help but think, ‘where are those tasty tomatoes, where are those watermelons which actually had a taste?’”

Here, the regret over the loss and disappearance of certain savors memorializes the alteration of a past form of life. To sigh over the vanishing of tasty produce is to mourn a mode of production that disappeared and was replaced by new and different economic relations. In the tasty tomatoes, Maradona regrets communism as a “yesteryear,” as a sort of mythological time when life was more palatable.

The examples above indicate that to pursue the communist past by consuming communist food products is to attend to the sensuousness of the past and to remain loyal to certain affective investments forged in the past. To actively seek the communist food

products and brands also means to get re-aquainted and side with the past in the new context of abundance brought about by the post-communist economy.

As Sutton argues, “in producing, exchanging and consuming food we are continually crisscrossing between the ‘public’ and the ‘intimate,’ individual bodies and collective institutions.”⁴⁷ The examples offered here illustrate this crisscross. While discourses and representations of these food products are actively present in the public sphere through commercials and other marketing activities, there is always a personal (although not entirely private) component to these practices of consumption. And yet, although these practices are “un-public,” they are relevant to the extent that they result in the selection of these food items as elements of the cultural working memory, or the canon. However, Aleida Assmann defined the canon as “the presentation of a narrow selection of sacred texts, artistic masterpieces, or historic key events in a timeless framework.”⁴⁸ The public attention granted to the “communist brands” suggests that they may be part of the canon, but they are far from being “sacred,” i.e., authoritative, which suggests that there is a sort of middle range of memory events, practices, objects, and discourses that establish themselves as meaningful, without being revered – especially in situations in which matters cannot be appreciated in terms of a “timeless framework.” Registering these middle-range remembering items might still be important for describing and assessing how the elements of the canon are selected: by discarding others or by exploring the ways in which they work alongside the “sacred” memory.

Audiencing Cultural Productions Recalling the Past

Audiencing cultural productions recalling the communist past is to pursue the communist past by being present for or paying attention to cultural discourses, events,

objects, and/or practices that recall the communist era. To a certain extent, the theme of audiencing cultural productions recalling the communist past pairs up with “using communism for cultural production.” In Romania, a conglomeration of energetic cultural activities actively engages the communist past. Several examples appear in previous chapters: the movie *Adalbert’s Dream*, the theatre performance *X mm from Y km*, the documentary *Metrobranding*, the Mechanical Workshop bar, the art installation by the National Museum of Contemporary Art, and the pioneer music concert. Over the years, theatre performances and plays,⁴⁹ movies,⁵⁰ documentaries,⁵¹ fiction books, pop music,⁵² sculptures, photographic and architectural projects, art installations, paintings, street art, websites, clothing items, various types of exhibits, a variety of formats of cultural debates, and diverse cultural events have varyingly continued to engage the communist past again and again.⁵³ Furthermore, practices that recycle, recirculate, and re-contextualize cultural productions from communism have also flourished. The music concert featuring pioneer songs is one example of such practices, but similar activities are visible in other arenas, especially television and cyberspace.⁵⁴ All of these discourses, events, objects, and practices memorialize, question, uncover, (re)invent, (re)describe, or (re)figure the past with gravity, playfulness, irony, nostalgia, or sarcasm, thus offering the past as a *bricolage* of cultural materials, forms, practices, and attitudes. In doing so, they provide cultural frameworks that function not necessarily (only) as models or as a stock of available meanings, but (also) aggregate to offer a field, an atmosphere or an ecology of remembering.

Such effervescent cultural activities recalling communism have the capacity to create a rhetorical environment that attends to, animates, and augments publics’

investments in the past. However, “audiencing cultural productions recalling the communist past” does not simply register the fact that where there is a rhetorical production there is also a public. “Audiencing” refers to individuals being alert to rhetorically salient productions related to the past, stressing the fact that publics, instead of being called by such productions, are going toward/after them. That is, it stresses the fact that publics themselves make motions toward rhetorical creations that remember communism, rather than simply being enticed by them.

As in the case of buying communist food products, this state of readiness for cultural products recalling communism can also be explained by the existence of affective investments in the past. For instance, when Lucia explains how she ended up attending the pioneer music concert, she notes that she already had an investment in this cultural production, an investment rooted in her own memories:

“I received an invitation by email from one of my friends. And I talked to her and we were saying, ‘Should we go?’ But I was busy during that period and told her, ‘Well, yeah... But I have work and I also have some other obligations I need to attend to...’ In the end though, we both said, ‘You know what? We should totally go! Considering how much time we spent singing at those crappy events⁵⁵...’ And so on and so forth... And I have to tell you that we both went and we both stood up singing.... We made a mockery! We were like, ‘shut up, I was third voice!’ For the last songs [in the program] the audience was in a frenzy! But you know what? We needed that! The circumstances were very bad... The wages had been suddenly cut, they had made us take five days off every month without pay... It was... 2010... Yes. The circumstances were very bad, because in 2009 Mister Băsescu assured us that there would be no [economic] crisis. You know, when he was re-elected—speaking of our eternal president re-elect⁵⁶... So yeah, after he assured us that there would be no crisis, we received the blow in August 2010 when some of the benefits were cut, and then they cut 25% from the wages... “

Lucia points here to her affective investment in this kind of cultural production – an investment rooted in memories, which, though personal, are not simply individual. She also hints at her participation in the concert was a way of letting off the steam that had built up as a consequence of the economic and political circumstances. For her,

experiencing the concert in a context of economic anxiety changes somehow the orientation to her memories and, consequently, her relationship to the past. While she remembers the events in which she used to perform in the past as “crappy,” singing the communist patriotic songs in the present is regarded as a lively, entertaining activity capable of relieving some of the angst of the current situation. To a certain extent, it would be tempting to read this example as a moment in which a sentimentalized past is used as refuge from a troubling present; but Lucia’s investment in the past is self-reflective. Qualifying it as “crappy,” she acknowledges the contemptible character of the past, and when she attends to it in the present she does so with playful mockery. While this particular cultural production presumes “pre-existing discourses and investments in identity”⁵⁷ of the type Lucia evidences (“*You know what? We should totally go! Considering how much time we spent singing at those crappy events...*”), these antecedent discourses and investments are also remade in the encounter with the concert⁵⁸—thus remaking the relations between present and past—during particular circumstances of economic and political nervousness.

Lucia paid attention to this concert and decided to participate in it after she found out about it in an email from a friend. When I asked him about the contexts in which he might remember communism, another interviewee, Octav, emphasized the self-consciousness that accompanies his motions toward cultural productions recalling communism:

“I am trying to remember in an active fashion. And there are a few areas that are of interest to me. For instance, if you go now to the National Museum of Contemporary Art, you will find a retrospective exhibition of the SubReal group⁵⁹. They made an installation with photographs from the official meetings of the Visual Artists’ Union, in which the president of the Union is always depicted shaking hands with another artist...⁶⁰ And... Um... These images always have a special impact on me... I mean, for me it is

interesting that these things are possible. I am looking for such details that in the end appear to me as a scenario ... I don't know, for me they look more like a fiction... For instance, sometimes I go to flea markets to look at the old books and I am fascinated by the quantity of books that were published during those times and the ways they used to be read... I was talking with someone from the rural area who told me, 'ah, us, here, in the country, being peasants and all... During the winter there was nothing to do so I would go to the Municipal Library and would read Tolstoy and other long books. Now I am not doing this anymore, because I have a TV.' But these types of details and information that immediately call my attention impress me by their capacity to fic... I mean, it's the reality from the past but today it seems fictional... "

Huyssen writes, "The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity."⁶¹ In observing the fiction-like quality of representations of the past, Octav notes this irremediable gap between the past and the memories that attempt to reconstruct it. However, he does not lament or ignore it—he is fascinated by it. In a way, it is his awareness of the impossibility of accessing the "reality" of the past that pushes him toward the art installation and the flea markets and, as he further mentioned in the interview, toward other practices, objects, and events engaging the communist past.

But this awareness, however, emerges in a context that is, as I mentioned earlier, busily engaged in evoking the past through a variety of cultural practices. This multitude of cultural modalities and practices of remembering shatters any real or original appearance of the past—if ever there could be one. But in chasing the past through and in each of these cultural activities, one hopes to capture some "real" version of the communist past. For instance, remember Paul's frustration regarding the *X mm from Y km* performance spoke to this hunger for a "real" past:

“I have seen many films and theatre shows about communism and none of them is able to take us back in time to the way things really were,” he noted during the post-performance dialogue.

In this milieu of “many” (*I have seen many films and theatre shows about communism*), people are willing to audience cultural productions recalling communism because they are invested in understanding their context as one in which, no matter how much is said and done, the memory of communism remains flawed and scarce. “Audiencing” points in a very concrete way to the idea that “a public” is a practice,⁶² an idea that both responds to and constitutes this context characterized by memory’s insufficiency.

Interest in the Past

Interest in the communist past also suggests a hope that by pursuing the communist past one can recover it for a better understanding of the present. At the same time, it communicates the idea that remembering is actively seeking for the past. Interest in the communist past names those instances in which people talk about and demonstrate their own or others’ interest in communism. To have an interest in communism is to follow the communist past persistently or seek to become acquainted with it, especially as presented in historical accounts. Unlike the previous category, which orients people’s attention toward specific cultural products, “interest in the communist past” orients people toward the history of communism. To be interested in communism is to declare a serious involvement with the past, one that is different from practices such as consuming communist food products or audiencing cultural products recalling communism, as these practices are supposedly less straightforwardly invested in attending to “the truth.”

Sometimes the interest in the communist past is general/historical. As Vaniousha told me, *“I spent time watching this documentary [about communism] because I wanted to understand what happened during that [communist] period. And then... I also read a lot... All sorts of books, articles, and testimonies about communism.”* Other times, the interest is focused on specific aspects of communism. Relating her husband’s interest in reading books about communists’ interventions in the urban landscape of Bucharest, Ștefania stated, *“He is interested because he loves Bucharest, and he saw the demolitions.”* The statements of Vaniousha and, especially, Ștefania reveal a commonly-held understanding that even when one had some direct experience of the communist past, one still does not really know it.

After 1989, a host of discourses continually stressed the ways in which the communist regime concealed, distorted, and manipulated various aspects of Romanian history and its own history. Given that the regime’s acts were wrapped in propaganda and secrecy, the year 1989 found even those individuals who experienced the regime for a significant amount of time not knowing the (entire) story of communism except from either the regime’s propaganda or word of mouth. The response to this void was a proliferation of materials about communism: memoirs, testimonies, documentaries, newspaper articles, and books. Research centers, book series, journals, and websites dedicated to the history of communism were created. Historians and political scientists, as well as journalists, philosophers, writers, and literary critics started to produce for the public space histories of communism⁶³ in an effort to recover “the pasts that communist regimes had systematically suppressed.”⁶⁴ In consuming these histories and by actively looking for information about the communist past,⁶⁵ people responded to the void they

felt in connection to the history of communism. Interest in communism is therefore practiced as a kind of necessity, an attempt to uncover an unknown history to which access was denied during the communist regime and which had to be unearthed in the years following 1989. Thus, people who are interested in the communist past pursue the historical truth—assuming that it is recoverable—in a fashion similar to that of the professionals who write histories of communism.

If historiography is “an exchange or complex dialogue both with the past and with the others inquiring into that past,”⁶⁶ the history of communism becomes a (potentially infinite) ground that facilitates and energizes the forging of relations between strangers (a public). Strangers engage with each other not by virtue of a specific discourse that addresses them, as Warner would have us believe,⁶⁷ but by virtue of an orientation (curiosity, for instance) toward the communist past. To some extent, in this economy of practices and orientations toward and affective investments in the past, the discrete differences between rhetors (historiographers), audience (those who are invested in engaging their historiographies), and context (the void in knowledge that incites both rhetors and audience in similar ways) become blurred. Significantly, this interplay between historiographical production and the interest in communism is likely to be helpful in explaining, at least partially, the process by which elements of the canon and the archive are selected.

The Past as Occupation

The communist past as occupation references instances in which activities and stories relate people’s current profession with the history/memory of communism. Unlike “interest in the communist past,” which engages individuals’ leisure time, “the

communist past as occupation” names instances in which people get involved with the communist past in the exercise of their profession. In this manner, pursuing the communist past becomes an activity that brings both monetary and symbolic gain.

The communist past as occupation varies in connection to the time allotted to communism. For some people, communism is an area of expertise to which they dedicate all of their work time, continuously. As a historian specializing in communism told me, *“I am going to the archives almost everyday. We are, everyday, in touch with the [communist] past.”* For other people, doing research into the history of communism might be an occasional task. Communism might occur as a topic for projects in a variety of professions. For instance, in the Pepsi campaign mentioned above, the advertising agency did extensive research to uncover the history of Pepsi, its connection to communism, and the ways people perceived the brand. The head of planning of Graffiti BBDO Romania stated in an online interview published by the online publication Iquads on June 28, 2011: *“I think this was the most intensive documentation we have done in the last few years: we watched and re-watched movies from the 70s and 80s, or newer movies that treat that period, we read blogs, we visited exhibitions, we spoke with our parents or with our friends’ parents. We also dug up various archives and in the public television’s archives we have found these images [that we used for the TV ad].”* In this case, the advertisement agency’s involvement with an aspect of communist history was incidental and time-bounded rather than ongoing. Similarly, an architect who participated in research on the communist apartment buildings noted, *“This project with the apartment buildings was in a larger context of projects that we tried to do in order to make interventions in the city.”* Communism can also be pursued as a sideline. The pins

collector I interviewed noted “*I go sell my pins at fairs every time my job allows it, about twice a month.*” The theatre director who did research in the archive for her performance of “X mm from Y km” and the designer who took it upon himself to save the industrial/communist past by collecting items from ruined factories which he then displayed in Atelier Mecanic also encountered and pursued the past in the exercise of their professions. While pursuing the past is traditionally a profession engaged in by historians or archeologists, in Romania, the history/memory of the communist past becomes the focus of multiple areas of expertise, and consequently is shaped by diverse perspectives, discourses, and professional practices.⁶⁸

Rigney argues, “Memories are always ‘scarce’ in relation to everything that theoretically might have been remembered.”⁶⁹ Scarcity, she explains, is an effect of five tendencies that characterize the work of remembering: selectivity (cultures select what is worth remembering), convergence (memories tend to converge and coalesce, for instance, in places of memory), recursivity (repetition of the same memories across media), modeling (grafting new memories to traditional forms of remembrance), and transfer (cultures and groups transfer or translate remembrance forms from one another).⁷⁰ While the memory of communism in Romania might evidence some, if not all, of these tendencies,⁷¹ the discourses, events, objects, and practices of remembering communism in Romania are, paradoxically, both sparse and abundant. Or, more exactly, while the rhetorical environment is rich in discourses, objects, events, and practices that engage the memory of communism, participants in the culture seem to feel that the memories are, nonetheless, insufficient. First, memories of communism are, of course, limited when compared with the totality of all the memories that might be remembered.

This ideal totality can be presupposed as an impetus for pursuing the communist past, but the Romanian context offers additional incentives. In Romania, no matter how numerous, the memories of communism are perceived as unsatisfactory because of the particular historical and political circumstances that denied the knowledge, expression, and debate of such memories for a significant period of time. As a consequence, both cultural practitioners and interested audiences attempt to reduce the scarcity of memories by doing “memory work,” that is, by engaging in “an active practice of remembering that takes an inquiring attitude towards the past.”⁷²

In addition to highlighting an active involvement with remembering, the concept of “pursuing the communist past” suggests, as discussed above, that there are circumstances or forces that push people into this active search for the past. The more general context of scarcity is also entangled with micro-contingencies and individual circumstances that authorize the quest for the communist past. The next section of this chapter attempts to explain some of the specific modalities through which the communist past is pursued, as well as to explore some of the elements that urge or motivate this pursuit. I focus on the figures of the historian and the architect, as they pursue communism via individual and professional practices that enter in a dynamic relationship with various public spheres.

The Historians

”Who Was Lica Gheorghiu?”

On the third of July, approximately two weeks after I met Ștefania, I went, once again, to Café Verona. This time I was about to meet three young researchers – two historians and one political scientist—who specialized in communism. At the time of the interview all three of them worked at the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes – a

governmental body that investigates the history of communism in Romania and supports public awareness of the communist past.

Because I got to the meeting place 10 minutes earlier than scheduled, I decided to make a quick visit to the bookshop adjoining *Café Verona*. *Librăria Cărturești* (The Bookish Men Book Shop) is located in a 19th-century house owned by the descendant of an old aristocratic Romanian family. Like many other old houses in Bucharest, the building had been abusively confiscated by the communist regime during the process of “nationalization.” “Nationalization” was intended to completely destroy private property as a form of ownership by bringing all individual properties into the fold of the state. Like some other houses confiscated by the communist authorities, this one had been restituted to its rightful owner through judicial procedures.⁷³ Unlike other old houses in Bucharest that were left to ruin, this building had been restored to house a prosperous business.

I went through the glass doors and climbed a small stairway. The inlaid herringbone wood flooring was pleasantly squeaking under my feet. I entered the room on the right looking for a novel that had been recommended to me by one of my acquaintances. The tall room’s walls were stacked with books on wooden shelves. In the middle of the room, a rectangular table exhibited, as the sign written in red letters said, the newest publications. With my eyes on my watch, I perused a couple of titles. First, I caught a glimpse of *Izvoade* (Manuscripts), a book of essays by Lucian Blaga, one of the most respected Romanian poets and philosophers of the inter-war period. The design of the cover—with nuances of warm green and brown—attempted to reproduce some of the traditional motifs of the Romanian peasants’ woven textiles. Stylized Christmas trees, a house, a goat, a man on a horse, and a flower appeared interlaced with a light-brown background. Further down the long table, an intriguing cover image drew my attention. It was the cover of *Viața Începe Vineri* (Life Begins on Friday), a novel by Ioana Pârvulescu, a contemporary Romanian writer. A moustached man dressed in nineteenth-century formal clothes—top hat, black tailcoat, black matching trousers, white silk vest, white tie, and sharp black shoes—stood in front of a mirror that leaned against a straw armchair. The mirror should have reflected him from the waist down, but instead the reflection revealed a man in jeans and sneakers instead of black pants and sharp shoes. Looking at my watch, I saw that I only had 5 minutes left. The book I was searching for was printed by Polirom a few years back, so I hurried toward the shelves on the wall, looking for the logo of this publishing house. I discovered the Polirom name, written in capital white letters inside a red rectangle on a stack of books in the far corner of the room. Among the stacks branded with this logo was the title I wanted: *Sînt o Babă Comunistă* (I am an old communist woman). Its cover depicted a foggy, dreamlike, black-and-white photograph of an old person crossing a street. As I lifted it from the shelf, I noticed how light it was. It was also very small, small enough to allow me to grasp its width within my palm. The author’s name, Dan Lungu, was written in black immediately above the red-lettered title. I skimmed through the pages, pausing on the first page of chapter 22 to read the first few sentences: “Boyers,’ that’s what they used to call us. Our section used to work for export and we were bringing in foreign currency. During that time, Ceaușescu wanted to pay our external debt to prevent the Occident from bothering us with the accrued interest, so the foreign currency was valuable. Our best products were reserved for exportation. The rejected merchandise, say, for instance, shoes made

for Occident, would be sold on the internal market and people would have killed to put their hands on those goods. We were making all sorts of metal products, so if they were ever rejected, they would have thrown everything out. And it would have been a big scandal. We had to be very careful, but they paid us well.”

Closing the book, I hurried toward the cashier. My fast steps made the floor squeak loudly and I slowed down in order to not disturb the quiet ambiance. I paid with Romanian bills the 10-dollar price of the book, rushed through the door, made a left onto Verona Street, and after walking about 15 feet I entered the outdoor yard of the Café. I was only 3 minutes late.

One of the three researchers I was supposed to meet was already at one of the large wooden tables eating, with gusto, the mashed potatoes and roast that sat in front of him. As I approached him, I saw the other two men, with filled plates from the all-you-can-eat buffet, heading toward us. I greeted them as they dropped their backpacks on the benches and settled before their heaping plates of food. They responded to my greeting with a friendly “Salut!” (Hello) and big smiles. They joked around for a while about picking up women.

Then, at some point, Mihai S. pulled out a small notebook and started to create an “oracle.” In the world of Romanian teenagers, oracolul (the oracle) is a memory object meant to remind one of the school years. Each oracol, usually staged in a regular notebook, is an individual creation with two sections. The first section contains a variety of questions that will be answered by one’s school mates. The questions range from generic topics, such as “What is your favorite food?” or “What is your zodiac sign?” to more intimate inquiries, such as “How long was your first kiss?” or “How would you define love?” The second half of the notebook is titled “Memories,” and each person who is handed “the oracle” is supposed to create a unique space by which s/he will be remembered by the notebook’s owner. Each person invited to fill in “the oracle” is supposed to unleash his/her creativity. These pages are usually populated with poetry and pieces of advice and decorated with pictures, drawings, and melted drops of colorful wax. Mihai S. started the impromptu “oracle” with the intention of leaving it at the restaurant, in order to be filled in by future customers. He wrote the first question accompanied by our collective laughter: “Why do you exist?” The second question was more specialized, emerging from the three men’s area of expertise: “Who was Lica Gheorghiu?” Mihai S. wrote down. He then mimicked the “Who wants to be a millionaire?” format: “You have three choices. If you don’t know the answer, call Mihail Neamțu.” The three men burst into laughter, but I did not get the joke. I knew Neamțu was the Scientific Director of the Institute they worked at. I also knew that he was a player on the right side of the political spectrum. Throughout the summer of my research (2012), Neamțu’s name had been frequently mentioned in the media, as he was very active in a new political movement called “The Movement for a New Republic.” Initially established as a civic association, the New Republic became a political party in July 2012.

So I asked them what the connection was between Lica Gheorghiu, the daughter of the first communist president, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and Mihail Neamțu. As Mihai A. explained, their joke alluded to Neamțu’s ignorance about the history of communism:

”I wasn’t there when it happened, but in 2010 there was a work meeting, immediately after he received the position of Scientific Director with the Institute. The

meeting had been called so the new management could get to know oamenii muncii [the working people].”⁷⁴ By this he meant the Institute’s team of researchers, but he used an expression of the communist-propaganda wooden language. “There were many people at that meeting and at some point, I don’t remember how, they got to talking about Lica Gheorghiu. And Neamțu said, I don’t know, that she was... his wife? Or what did he say?”

Marius confirmed, “Yes, he said that she was Gheorghiu-Dej’s wife...”

Mihai A. further explained the significance of the episode: “He had just been appointed the scientific director of the Institute, you know? Everybody was like...” And then he said in dismay: “Oh my gosh!”

In the meantime, Mihai S. continued to devise questions for the oracle. As he reached question number 6, he asked for help. “What question should we ask at number 6? I know: ‘What question would you like to have at number 7?’” We all burst out laughing.

The laughter and the jokes continued throughout our conversation, as they persevered with the creation of „the oracle.” They also oscillated—with no difficulty—between paying attention to their environment, the waitress, and the women at the neighboring tables and the serious topics of my questions.

„Until I Exhaust Everything”

“I’ll tell you,” Mihai A. hastily responded to my question about what their life looks like everyday. “Today I went to the archives. After we leave from here [the restaurant], I go and upload to my computer everything I did today. Tomorrow I will go to the Romanian Academy library, last week I have been in the archive of the Internal Affairs Ministry. Then I will sort what I have, I will sort them according to topics, what I am interested in, what I am not interested in, what I need... Something like that...”

Returning his focus from the discussion he had initiated with the woman at the next table, Mihai S. asked him: “But what do you want to do? You made me curious...”

Mihai A. happily offered details: “What I want to do... I have opened ‘construction sites.’ I want to do the biography of Ion Iliescu’s father, Alexandru Iliescu, da cappo al fine. Then... the Romanian fighters during the Spanish civil war—500 individuals. I want to do a sort of monograph... And then there is... The biography of Cristina and Mihail Boico, a couple of internationalists... She fought in the French resistance and he fought in Spain as a sergeant in the international brigades. So I have opened all sorts of such ‘construction sites’... I just liked certain topics. Next year I want to finalize them... Or in two years, max. As I find new information, I insert it into the text. I have about 60-70 pages for each of these topics. And I will keep adding and adding information until I exhaust everything. I will exhaust everything at CNSAS (The Council for the Study of Secret Police Archives), I will exhaust the archive of the External Affairs Ministry, the National Archives, the Academy’s archives... Until next year, when I have to finalize all these projects. That’s about it...”

“You mean you want to publish books on each of these topics?” I asked.

“Yes,” Mihai A. replies. „Books or studies. I don’t know, it depends on how much more I will find, as I don’t know what I will find. I mean... I go and search and it is as if I am jumping into a pool and searching at the bottom of the pool... These are personal

projects, but we also have common projects. For instance, the Dictionary of the officers and civil employees of the Prison Department. Now we are on the third volume, we have already published two volumes.”

The figure of the historian takes us back to the archive. In the case of the theatre director of “X mm from Y km,” the performance discussed in the previous chapter, entering the archive was a matter of a more transitory interest. For the historian, however, the archive is a matter of professional, long-term preoccupation and, as the above statements describe, it involves a permanent, near daily contact. “For most historians, the normative-experience-cum-rite-of-passage is work in the archives, including the perils of ‘archive fever,’” LaCapra writes.⁷⁵ As the above interview fragment shows, this holds true for these researchers. It also holds true for several categories of professionals, as well as for journalists, and private persons.⁷⁶ This “archive fever” as Derrida⁷⁷ calls it, or “documentary frenzy,” as Ricoeur puts it,⁷⁸ has not only taken hold of the historians, but of the larger Romanian population.

There are at least two significant institutions that manage archival funds relevant for this discussion, both of which were mentioned by my interviewee. First, the Council for the Study of Secret Police Archives (CNSAS)—an autonomous institution supervised by the Parliament—administers the documents received from the communist secret police. These documents represent the files compiled by the communist secret police on the citizens of Romania. By law, individuals have access to their own file and are entitled “to learn the names of Securitate agents and collaborators who contributed information to their files.”⁷⁹ In addition, based on the archive, CNSAS verifies whether individuals seeking public office collaborated with the communist Securitate.⁸⁰ Second, the National Archives administers, amongst other records dating back to the 15th century, a series of

significant documents related to the communist period: documents issued by the Romanian Communist Party, records related to the communist prisons and labor camps, documents that emanated from the high official structures of communist Romania such as Consiliul de Miniștri [the State Departments' Council], and the State Council, and records of political and historical trials from the inter-war and the post WW II periods. The National Archives also maintain documents that prove individual property rights.⁸¹

Consequently, for historians and other professionals preoccupied with communism, as well as for laypeople who enter the archive, archive fever—especially in relation to the Secret Police files—is caused by particular circumstances. First, as I mentioned before, information on communism has long been scarce and scattered. Very little was known “in a systematic manner” and the information that people had on the history of communism was based on “memoirs, diaries, and biographies,” rather than official documents.⁸² People—not only in Romania, but all over Eastern Europe—believe that the truth about the communist regime is to be found in the archives, and, as a consequence, “access to the secret archives has been viewed as quintessential to any examination of the recent past.”⁸³ The archive was thought to provide a valuable supplement to the experiences and memories offered by testimonies, memoirs, diaries, biographies, or oral histories. In addition, Romanians craved to discover the long-lasting secrets of the Securitate, the oppressive apparatus of the communist regime, which had terrorized the population during communism and started to fascinate it during post-communism.⁸⁴ In this context, to pursue the history of communism in the archive is to pursue the truth. Second, the delay in ensuring access to the archive, the alterations or destruction of some of the documents,⁸⁵ and the restrictions imposed on archives made

the path toward accessing the files slow, bumpy, and sinuous.⁸⁶ These obstacles only increased the agitation and the excitement around the public opening of the archives. Third, the fervor about entering the archive was enhanced by the high stakes involved in accessing the secret documents. The archive was treasured for containing information that would help evaluate the moral legitimacy of individuals who wanted to hold public offices. More generally, it was thought that the opening of the files would be instrumental in sanitizing Romanian politics⁸⁷ because the documents included clues as to who had collaborated with the communist regime. In addition, the archive also held evidence instrumental in obtaining “forms of material redress – including pecuniary compensation – for those who experienced past persecution.”⁸⁸

Morris argues that the the archive should be considered “not as a passive receptacle for historical documents and their ‘truths,’ or a benign research space, but rather as a dynamic site of rhetorical power.”⁸⁹ The two archives mentioned above were constructed—through discourses and practices—as scenes of discovery. To the extent that the archive presents evidence of material rights, proof of moral purity (or, on the contrary, of questionable conduct), and historical evidence related to people who are very much alive and active, some—if not all—of the research undertaken in this archive is anything but benign. The rhetorical power of the documents is deeply entangled with their direct political and material consequentiality.

Significantly, the historian’s documentary practices are enmeshed within this complicated setting. To enter the archive everyday, as my interviewee did, is to enter a space highly charged with political, material, and emotional investments. To enter the archive everyday is to routinely put one’s body and one’s work in the midst of these

currents of influence and commitment. As such, his archival fever—“*I will keep adding and adding information until I exhaust everything. I will exhaust everything...*” he told me during our interview—is not only a professional bug. For the reasons I explored above, he shares this febrile state with other communities of experts and, more generally, with society at large. Even as there might be a special relation between the historian and the archive,⁹⁰ the work of historians inside and outside the archive is met, engaged, or crossed by a variety of bodies, practices, and investments—including those of private persons, artists, and journalists—which subsequently widens the perspectives and diversifies the languages through which the debate about the communist past is carried out in Romania.⁹¹

In this context, rather than being a place for the occasional encounter of the researcher with documents, the archive is a setting bursting with activity. The archive is not a simple repository of „historical stuff”⁹² or „a space where things are hidden in a state of stasis, imbued with secrecy, mystery and power.”⁹³ The practices and investments that animate its rows of shelves and files make it a place where people do things with history. Steedman argued that we should think of the „History that people do things with: think by, imagine by, remember with.”⁹⁴ In the archives of the communist period, people are doing things with history, but their activities are not only thinking, imagining, or remembering. Because the archive facilitates property restitution and is capable of influencing people’s reputation, these activities change lives and the shape of the present in a very immediate and material fashion.

These circumstances bring the archive closer to entering the canon. In Aleida Assman’s view, the criteria for identifying an element of the canon are „emphatic

appreciation, repeated performance, and continued individual and public attention.” In contrast, the archive would be characterized by ”emphatic reverence and specialized historical curiosity.”⁹⁵ At this particular moment in time, the archives of communism are both the focus of expert professional interest and of public attention and appreciation, thus occupying an undecided space between the reference and the working memory.⁹⁶

„To Speak of Recent History
Is to Speak of the Entire History”

After Mihai A. shared some information about the projects they had in common as a team, Mihai S. intervened to explain the benefits of this historical research for other areas of their activities: “For me it was really important, as it provided us with an opening for this other thing that we’re doing... For our activism... And we took advantage of this opening very well, I would say.”

Mihai A. agreed, “Yes, it offers you a background... To research the recent history, I mean, is very useful...”

Continuing his train of thought, Mihai S. provided more details, “That is to say that it [researching the communist past] offered us the possibility of having a fixed position and of finding a niche that we have exploited very well. In this space there is no other organization, especially if we talk about documents and investigation... and so this created for us the possibility of being recognized in the Romanian public space... We gained credibility because if we had done only street activism it would have been more difficult. So we also came with this other aspect...”

“How would you describe this niche?” I asked for further clarification.

“This niche is constituted by this area of recent history, especially the biographies of the former... and current party nomenclatura. We focused on this area that was previously vacant, you know? We came up with things nobody had written about before....”

Marius contributes his take on the issue: “But I also think it’s about the fact that, generally speaking, the people—although I don’t like this phrase, ‘the people’— have the memory of a goldfish. They very quickly forget certain things... From one end of the aquarium to the other they have forgotten already the path they have taken. And considering the Romanian transition with the communist elites’ conversion and the privatization of the secret police...⁹⁷ To speak of recent history is to speak of the entire history. If one wants to understand the various [political] camps, their ideologies, and their... what do you call them? ... Their esoteric agendas... one has to look back deep into the past. I think that there is something false about the way in which [Romanian] democracy was constituted, because there are many skeletons in the closet. And then... one has to very carefully examine the grey areas and see, as Mihai S. said, what each person did in their immediate past.”

“So you hope to discover the skeletons in the closet?” I asked.

“Yes, in a way,” Marius replied and then clarified: “Not necessarily. What we hope to achieve is a more general critical attitude in regard to Romanian political life. And this attitude implies the investigation of recent history.”

De Certeau argues, “all historiographical research is articulated over a socioeconomic, political, and cultural place of production.”⁹⁸ In the previous section I explored and attempted to sketch the characteristics of the archive—one of the privileged workplaces for historians—as a place of production. De Certeau refers to the place of the historian as existing in a web of professional, social, and ideological relations that produces, among other effects, a series of methods and a topography of interests.⁹⁹ My interviewees are immersed in the larger field of Romanian historiography and in the particular research institution they work for, which, in turn, is connected in specific ways to the larger professional field of historians. This immersion, however, is experienced, observed, and used in ways that depend on these men’s biographies and life goals. While the two structures to which they belong might bind their practices as researchers, citizens, and private persons in a variety of ways, my interviewees use their status as historians to do their work as activists. As Mihai A. stated in the interview, they use their position as researchers of what they call “recent history” as a way to “be recognized in the public space.” They are able to accumulate symbolic capital as researchers of communism because of the people’s interest and investment in the recent past and the fact that their professional interest in the communist archives—the archive fever—is shared with larger segments of the population.

Their work—and the symbolic capital they acquire as a result of it—is further influenced by their specific subject positions. Writing about the developments in Romanian historiography in the years after 1989, Iordachi argues, “the body of

practitioners has become nevertheless very heterogenous, with dissidents, former collaborators, and an emerging post-1989 generation of historians competing to carve out a space in the public sphere for their respective discourses.”¹⁰⁰ This author suggests that the field of historiography itself is divided according to a logic of collaboration/dissidence—a logic that is also at the center of some of the practices around the secret police archive. To be a ”collaborator” of the regime in the field of historiography meant to sacrifice professional integrity in order to write, as Verdery put it, in a “Party mode,”¹⁰¹ that is, to subsume Romanian history under the Communist Party agenda. The three young researchers I interviewed were in their mid to late 30s; their careers started well into the post-communist years. The serendipitous moment of their birth allowed them to function outside this logic: they could not have been collaborators or dissidents. At the same time, their relatively young age meant that they were (at the time of the interview), and still are, in the process of constructing a voice for themselves, or, as Iordachi put it, of „carv[ing] out a space in the public sphere for their respective discourses.” These researchers choose to carve this space by weaving together two types of activities that are usually regarded as distinct, but which, in the historians’ rendering, are particularly meaningful together: practicing history and practicing activism. In addition, these activities make sense together due to the specific institutional context of their work.

Affiliated with the Institute for the Investigation of Communism Crimes, these three researchers practice history in a way that is shaped by institutional policies and dynamics that are illustrative of the larger field of historical studies in Romania. More generally, as researchers pursuing the communist past, they have to navigate a field of

historical studies marked, at the institutional and administrative levels, by a series of issues that shape and constrain the activities of practitioners. There are two factors in particular that were expressed as concerns during our interview. First, while there is an institutional revival and restructuring, there is a pronounced competition for financial resources that privilege some organizational affiliations while frustrating others. Second, there is a significant political influence on various aspects of historical activity.¹⁰²

During our interview, for instance, Mihai A. described in some detail the differences in resources between his own institution and the National Council for the Study of Securitate's Archives, as well as the political maneuvering to which the archive was subjected:

“They have so many people there... They have assistants and cars... And as a researcher, if one goes to them in need of some photocopies, one has to wait 3 to 4 months... Because they say, ‘we don’t have the personnel, there is nobody who can make them for you.’ Come on!” He spoke with anger and frustration in his voice, his eyebrows furrowed as he made large gestures with his hands. While he was speaking to me, he addressed them: “Come on! You have cohorts of assistants, functionaries, and... But you don’t have someone to make a copy! Well, the reason I am saying all this and I am so upset is that we are in a conflict with them. Uhm... We have been disputing with them for two years already and we... We monitored their activities and published a series of reports on our website.” He was referring here to the website of the non-governmental association they established together a few years back. “In these reports we stated what we had observed, what we thought they were doing wrong... Well, in such a situation, the normal thing to do would be to also listen to what they have to say. Anyway, they issued a statement in ‘22 Magazine.’¹⁰³ So we are subjective, very subjective. Oh, well, any opinion is subjective, but I have to tell you that we have this war with them... We are affectively involved.”

Mihai S. joined the discussion to add, “Plus... they support researchers in a discretionary manner. If you are a public person such as, say, Lucia Hossu Longin... ”

Lucia Hossu Longin was the producer of “Memorialul Durerii” (The Memorial of Suffering), one of the very first documentaries about the communist regime, which disclosed the communist atrocities of the 40s and 50s – prisons, labor camps, and the violent oppression of the individuals who were opposing the regime. The documentary, a series broadcast by the Romanian public television, was one of the first sources for learning about the history of communism, as Hossu Longin video-recorded testimonies from a variety of participants in significant historical events from the communist period.

Jumping in, Mihai A. finished the sentence, "...you have a different treatment." He continued, "Yes, Mihai S. is right. So... until we made a bit of a scandal, until we threatened that we would take the issue to the street.... We used to receive the requested copies after one year, you see? And yes, like Mihai S. said, other people are privileged. And so we had to do something. We had numerous people signing petitions, but it was difficult, because the signatories were mostly young people who had not made a name for themselves yet... They were in between 25 and 35 years old. And it was hard... All the people with reputation receive their copies immediately."

"I think that," Mihai S. intervened, "there is also another issue: nobody knows that there is also this [IICMER] institution. And then... there are numerous former collaborators in the cultural and political milieus."

"Yes," Marius agreed.

"Yes," Mihai A. concurred.

"This institution [CNSAS) was established to deconspire [the secret police's collaborators]... But there are cases in which files that are almost similar... One person is certified as collaborator, and the other as non-collaborator." He then offered an example involving a soccer player and a singer—both of them quite well known in Romania. "G.P. [the soccer player] received a paper saying that he did not collaborate with the secret police, although the documents attest to his collaboration. D.B., in turn, had written only one informative note, but he accepted that his studio be used by Securitate as a conspirational house. G.P. had done the same thing: he wrote several informative notes and allowed the Securitate to use his house. One of them received a verdict of collaboration, the other did not. And why? Because D.B.'s wife had signed one of our press releases. That's what this is about. I mean, these are summary executions," said Mihai S. using a term that was generally used in reference to the communist practice of staging fake trials to obtain and execute quick sentences for the "people's enemies." He continued to speak about the corruption of CNSAS, while emphasizing the fact that he and his colleagues are not afraid to speak up: "For certain people, these certificates became a business. At least one or two of the individuals who run the Council have some [financial] arrangements with some Germans, some Transylvanian Saxons who most probably are trying to reclaim some houses... Plus... There was trafficking of influence... Political bargaining... They would simply say... 'I will or I won't issue a certificate for your man. But you won't issue one for mine, either.' You should know that you are talking to people who are not afraid of words..."

Along with their job with the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes, the three young men were involved with the non-governmental association Miliția Spirituală (The Spiritual Militia), established in May 2002, when they were still in college. The organization's mission is to "mobilize the citizens' civic conscience and their spirit of solidarity,"¹⁰⁴ or, as Marius stated in the interview, "to achieve a more general critical attitude in regard to the Romanian political life." Although the

organization's activity is not especially geared toward the history of communism, their civic practice was called for in situations when their historical practice was impeded by inequalities promoted by the institutional system or when political maneuvering skewed historical evidence, such as in the two cases described above. The actions of their non-governmental association over the years include debates on various issues related to democracy, such as the vote mechanism and the activity of the police in post-communist Romania, or on timely topics, such as the debate about soccer fans' participation in street protests in 2012; the coordination of volunteer teams for observing the local elections; and the organization of activism schools and camps. In addition, the organization promptly acts – via press releases that stir debate in media and civil society – to raise awareness any time the state's institutions drift from their democratic roles. For instance, in September 2013, the Romanian Education Department signed an agreement with the Justice Department in which it was planned that public prosecutors and judges would teach civic education to high school students. The Spiritual Militia's press release drew attention to the problematic nature of this project, emphasizing that,

“The most important right in a democracy is the right to know one's rights. This reprehensible interference of the judiciary system in the education process aims at inoculating the idea that the obligation supersedes the right! The state's oppressive apparatus should not approach young people in regards to civic education [especially when we consider its morality].”¹⁰⁵

Over the years the men in front of me participated in a variety of actions – including street protests and public debates – addressing corruption, illegalities, the transparency of state institutions, abuses of institutional and corporate power, civil rights, unethical political behavior, ethnic discrimination, the political control of the media, and so on. In other words, in their activist practice they remain alert to

manifestations of non-democratic practices with which they are all too familiar because of their extensive knowledge of the communist history.

In many ways, their activism is meant to defend Romania's public life from the totalitarian, abusive practices of the past that they investigate by virtue of their area of expertise as historians. The past, then, is assumed to offer a cautionary tale. A critical attitude toward Romanian politics, Marius stated, requires the investigation of recent history. Pursuing the communist past and getting acquainted with recent history is for them intimately related to the practice of freedom. They weave together the practices of history, memory, and civic activism in order to exercise democracy and defend the present from the totalitarian impulses of the past.

The Architect

“Wherever You Go, You See the Apartment Buildings”

Many of my interviewees mentioned the omnipresence of apartment buildings in Bucharest as a constant reminder of the communist era. Vaniousha, for instance, mentioned during our interview, *“Communism is present everyday in the workers’ neighborhoods with apartment buildings. You know? You see the same apartment building façade, decaying everyday...”* In a similar way, Maradona stated that recalling communism in daily movements throughout the city is somewhat inevitable due to the presence of the apartment buildings: *“Well, of course you remember communism, because wherever you go, you see the apartment buildings.”*

Although taken for granted as commonplace habitation structures and thus possibly embedded in what Jameson calls “the numbness of everyday,”¹⁰⁶ the apartment buildings also stand apart as places recalling communism. On the one hand, they continue

to be a significant part of the post-communist everyday: people have routine, intimate contact with these buildings while inhabiting them, while walking amongst them, or both. On the other hand, the blocks of flats are also experienced as unwanted, indestructible gross residues of communism. Thus they are both part of the present everyday and alien to it.

As memory places existing in the heart of the Romanian capital city, these apartment blocks raised during the communist regime stand outside what Boyer called “the memory system of public monuments and places.”¹⁰⁷ And yet people understand them as places that encapsulate the memory of communism. The communist regime erected the apartment buildings as a way of reconstructing the city and the life of its citizens according to its ideology. “The celebration of a new political order in Romania,” writes Cavalcanti, had been expressed “by replacing one-family houses, representative of Bucharest’s bourgeois fabric, with collective dwellings of standardized design.”¹⁰⁸

Under communism, the apartment buildings were envisioned as a progressive mode of habitation in opposition to the “retrograde” bourgeois one-family homes. The apartment buildings were supposed to transfigure the society as a whole, by dismantling the differences between classes and between rural and urban areas.¹⁰⁹ For the Romanian post-communist society, which largely adopted the tenets of capitalism, these goals are not only obsolete, but also deeply objectionable. As constant reminders of the communist ideology and of its collectivist project, the apartment buildings disfigure the post-communist city. The architect Ioana Sandi, for instance, considers that the socialist style – including the “typical socialist tower blocks” – produces a “strangely perverted landscape.”¹¹⁰ In everyday exchanges, the complexes were (and still are) referred to as

“match boxes,” pointing to their limited space as a constraint imposed on individual freedom. Many of my interviewees also referred to them as “ugly,” pointing to both their decay and standardized design.¹¹¹

The inadequacy of the apartment buildings in the new post-communist era became manifest in at least three rather frequent practices. First, the tenants bought their apartments from the state thus transforming them into private property.¹¹² Second, as the change in ownership afforded a degree of freedom over the spaces, some of these apartments began a career as commercial venues or offices. Maradona’s office was located in an apartment building and like Maradona’s NGO, many other business ventures—especially those focused on services—are located in communist apartments.¹¹³ Third, people and real estate companies started to buy land at the outskirts of Bucharest in order to build one-family houses.¹¹⁴ This significant movement toward the suburbs and the one-family forms of habitation represented not only an escape from a constantly growing city, but also a circumvention of, and running away from the apartment buildings.¹¹⁵

Changing the form of ownership, finding alternative patterns of use and habitation, and breaking away from the apartments in a flight toward the countryside are all practices that communicate these constructions as troubling structures in need of creative solutions. Like the House of the People, the apartment buildings are obstinate traces of the past—difficult if not impossible to remove—that stand in the way of the city’s reconstruction after communism. Consequently, they raise the issue of the possibilities and limitations of overcoming communism from an architectural and social point of view.¹¹⁶

Due to their thick presence and ubiquity in the contemporary urban landscape (one can see them everywhere, as Maradona put it), their constant association with communism (“communist apartment blocks,” people call them incessantly), and the practices discussed above, these constructions are rhetorically salient materialities with special significance for the remembering of communism. The apartment buildings, however, are peculiar places of memory. As massive abounding constructs of an ideology and era now deeply scorned, these places constitute insufferable, unmovable landmarks. People are torn between hating them for what they represent (the communist past) and acknowledging their utility in the present real estate economy. Maradona’s reflections on the topic are illustrative in this regard:

“These apartment buildings that I used to hate so much... You know, I kept abhorring the fact that I grew up in these match boxes... Well, now we probably realize that they are not so bad. You know, in our twenties we were saying, ‘what a monstrosity!’ But then you wake up being thirty, wanting a house and a family. Let’s see how you will make it! And in the end you struggle to make it precisely in one of these communist flats that you loathed for such a long time...”

“Addressed to the eye of vision and to the soul of memory,” Boyer writes, “a city’s streets, monuments, and architectural forms often contain grand discourses on history.”¹⁷ And yet, the apartment buildings also address living bodies and, as such, occupy a complex nexus of history, memory, everyday life, and economy. People see them, walk by them, rent, buy, and live in them, remember communism because of them, construct the history of the city around them, and imagine their future in spite of and around them. So to attend to them, to pursue an understanding and a transformation of them, is to pursue, at once, past, present, and future of the city and its people.

These were the main reasons why I was interested in the apartment buildings. While doing some research on the Internet, I found “Magic Blocks. Scenarios for

socialist collective housing estates in Bucharest,” a project run by architects who aspired to re-integrate the communist apartment houses in the current urban and social landscape. The Internet also helped me to find the email address for one of the project’s initiators, Ștefan. He responded rather promptly to my email and a couple of days later, on July 12, I was, for the first time in my life, on Strada Plantelor [Plants’ Street]. As I searched for number 70, the address indicated by Ștefan, I could not help but notice that almost all of the houses in the area were old—dating from the beginning of the 19th century—and there were no apartment buildings in sight.

I arrived in this downtown area coming from the Militari [Army Men] neighborhood, situated on the outskirts of the city. Like a few other Bucharest neighborhoods, Militari is mostly composed of tower blocks. In the seventies, Ceaușescu’s administration demolished almost all the houses in the community to replace them with nine- and ten-story apartment buildings. My grandparents’ house, where my parents live now and where I lived for the duration of this research, survived miraculously and is now surrounded by generous layers of cement where people live on top of each other. During my stay, I witnessed the efforts of workers on scaffolds as they labored to improve the tired blocks. In 2005, all over Bucharest, the local authorities had started a “thermal rehabilitation” of the old communist high-rise buildings. Among other things, the process involved the replacement of all windows and exterior doors, “packing” the exterior walls in a 10-15-centimeter-thick polystyrene layer, and, finally, applying a new coat of paint over the old one. The whole process was highly controversial from a technical point of view, but also from an aesthetic one, as professionals, politicians, and ordinary citizens disagreed about the benefits of both the polystyrene and the new paint color.

But there, on Strada Plantelor, on my way to meet the architect, there were no apartment buildings and no scaffolds – although some of the houses looked as if they could have used a face-lift. Clean, renovated villas alternated with degraded walls adorned with climbing plants and air conditioning units. The street and some of its houses, although not exactly classified as “historical monuments,” nonetheless had a “protected” status under Bucharest’s city hall ordinances. The city hall’s protection consisted in rigorous scrutiny of all construction and restoration projects in the area, to ensure that the historical and cultural features of the place are preserved.

Many of Bucharest’s old houses—including some of the buildings on Plantelor Street—are rented by commercial entities. On May 9, 2013, the Romanian online publication *Wall-Street* featured a number of such organizations that have chosen to run their businesses from a location that would add to the company’s prestige and image. In her *Wall-Street* piece, journalist Cristina Mihai writes, “The robust history and architecture carried by these spaces have an energy of their own that is further communicated to those who occupy them in the present.”

The old house at number 70 lent its history to the architecture magazine *Zeppelin* where Ștefan worked. An interphone guarded the red painted iron gates and when I pressed its button, a young woman’s voice responded, “Yes, please?” After telling her who I was and that I was there to see Ștefan, I heard a buzz followed by a click. I pressed down the hard gate knob and entered a spacious yard. However, because the five or six stair steps to the door were just five or six feet away from the gate, I only had time to take in the green grass to my left. Once the heavy wood entrance door closed behind me, I

started to climb a cold and dark spiral flight of stairs to the second floor, where Ștefan had said I would find him. The architect was waiting for me at the door, where we shook hands and exchanged pleasantries:

“Nice to meet you,” he said.

“Nice to meet you, too,” I replied and then quickly added “Thank you again for agreeing to see me.”

Ștefan invited me to take a seat in front of his desk and offered me a glass of water. We were not exactly in a separate room, but rather in what had probably once been a hall. Behind my chair, there was a tall shelving structure crammed with files.

“I Am Not Nostalgic at All”

From my online research, I knew that the Magic Blocks project sought solutions to rethink and transform the public spaces around and between the apartment buildings. The “block” from the title made reference to “bloc,” the Romanian term for apartment building. “Magic” attempted to convey the idea that the apartment buildings have a “remarkable urban potential,” as opposed to being a problem. To a large extent, this architectural project deployed a novel discourse, in its refusal to treat the communist apartment buildings as inadequate and undesirable remnants of the past. Among other things, my interview with the architect pointed to the rise of a discourse and practice which attempts to re-position, re-purpose, and re-contextualize the apartment buildings in a way that makes sense for the current social and economic environment. Such ideas as the value of the apartment buildings on the market, their potential as an ecologic, better modality of occupying the urban space, as well as a concern for utilizing the public space around them illustrate this notion that the apartment buildings have to be re-rendered as modes of habitation intelligible for the present.

“This is a longer-term project,” Ștefan noted, as he started to describe the project at my request. During our interview, his voice conveyed pride and excitement about the project. But, at times, I thought I also heard tiredness and disappointment, especially when he invoked the misguided actions of the city administration.

He uttered his explanations patiently, with a self-confidence that reflected his knowledge of the subject matter. “It’s true though that last year we have not

accomplished too much and this year is equally difficult, because it is a research project aimed at finding and proposing solutions for... regenerating the housing neighborhoods from the socialist period. That's what we called it, this is the major title. So this idea of regeneration is.... Well, the central idea of the project is that... Ahmm... There is a huge issue. About 70% of Bucharest's inhabitants live in these apartment houses. But at the same time, they represent... So, any type of romantic solution such as erasure, demolition, replacement and so on is completely utopic, whether one likes these houses or not. But at the same time, they represent, in a way, an advantage, an asset, even if we only speak of their real estate value. And also because, in the end, it constitutes a dense modality of occupying the urban space and they might even be one of the alternatives to suburbs, and so on...

"When we began this project, the authorities had already started the so-called rehabilitation programs that are just about the thermo-isolation of facades and the enclosure of balconies. I have to admit that we are very critical of these actions. So it seemed to us that there was a need to raise this issue of regeneration, because without regeneration, the value of these houses will significantly drop. The apartment buildings' situation is very special, like everywhere in Eastern Europe, as 99% of them are now private property. It is private property that is broken into small pieces, in other words it is individual property. And this means that solutions valid for countries such as France or Holland or... even America... for social housing are completely inoperative in Romania. Here one would need to bring together very many different agents at the same table. So, for us, this regeneration is a more comprehensive perspective that considers not only the housing, but also the public space around it. It is not limited to the façade's superficial treatment, but it also possibly engages a deeper functional understanding. And in any case, it aspires to be a mechanism for... How should I put it? A mechanism for bringing people together. A mechanism of cooperation and coordination. This is the major idea.

"You know... Everybody talks about ecology, but first of all it's about urbanism. Collective housing means smaller plots, so it is more ecological, because the resources are concentrated: fewer streets, fewer wires, less wasted energy, less distance to and fro, fewer polluting cars, compared to 50 kilometers to the suburbs. In fact, collective housing is ecological, beyond solar panels and other things like this. And also from a social perspective... In America's case... I think that New York City produced more art than the suburbs (He laughed).

"And... Well, I'm saying this in passing, speaking of... I would not want this [argument] to be understood as an ideological document, as communist nostalgia – because I am not nostalgic at all. This is a matter of fact."

The construction by the communist regime of the apartment buildings was part of a larger urbanization project that "intended to embody a new way of life in accordance with the official communist ideology of a classless society."¹¹⁸ The tower blocks expressed this utopian aim¹¹⁹ of the communist program and, as such, saturated both the

space of the city and the everyday life of its inhabitants with politics. From the perspective of the leftist theories, the everyday space of the apartment buildings was the terrain on which the revolution was supposed to be realized.¹²⁰ The apartment spaces during communism could also be read as safe havens protecting their inhabitants from the control of the state.¹²¹ From the perspective of theories of totalitarianism, these types of homes represented the attempt of the state to take over and homogenize people's private lives.¹²² In many ways, the apartment buildings continue to organize and restrict private lives in a way that sensuously reminds people of communism's totalitarian agenda. And if, as Connerton writes, "patterns of body use become ingrained through our interactions with objects," the bodies living in the apartment buildings do not only remember but also continue to routinely reproduce the types of restricted movements, trajectories, and relationships with others' bodies required by these communist architectural forms. And yet, these motions, sketched now in a different environment, do not have the same meaning they had during communism. Life in the apartment building has ceased to directly signify the heavy, felt control of the state. Instead, it only recalls that control. So the rhetoric of the architects' project addresses this shift in meaning and further attempts to re-signify and re-position both the apartment buildings and the lives housed by them. In re-imagining them as ecological social associations, the architects attempt to breathe new, respectable meanings into the communist tower blocks.

As remnants of a communist ideology that always stood in direct opposition to capitalism, these tower blocks are, to a certain extent, subversive buildings. They subvert the new rising hegemonic tastes of capitalism in regard to housing, such as one-family houses or larger housing estates. At the same time, the blocks of flats continue to be a

pragmatic habitation solution in a context in which the post-communist state failed to introduce suitable housing policies and in which the change in urban activities shrank the space available for homes. The ways in which the architects' rhetoric frames the apartment buildings also subverts the luxurious, wasteful ideals of the capitalist economy, instead developing a discourse in which the apartment buildings are cast as a viable alternative to the bourgeois suburbs.

Boyer argues that a city's "physical structure constantly evolves, being deformed or forgotten, adapted to other purposes or eradicated by different needs."¹²³ Although the needs are certainly different, the time for the eradication of the communist tower blocks has not yet come. The communist regime built them as durable edifices and their durability is an effect not only of their materials, but also of their proliferation throughout the city. While attempts at altering their physical structure – such as the authorities' rehabilitation program – have been made, in the process they were not so much deformed but rather dressed up. As the architect mentioned, and as I commented earlier, the rehabilitation was highly controversial, as experts do not believe in the soundness of the technical efforts and laypeople are skeptical that any outside modification can improve the look of the buildings. The Magic Blocks project thus comes as an alternative solution, as a way of imagining the place of the apartment buildings in a better future. Like buying communist food products, the actions of the architects attempt to rehabilitate a past that is largely seen as undesirable. The architects' investment in this project, the debates over the rehabilitation process, and the discourses and practices that surround the communist blocks indicate the difficulty of a unequivocal orientation toward the apartment buildings.

Ahmed argues that shared feelings – which “are not about feeling the same feeling, or feeling-in-common” – “seem to surround us, like a thickness in the air.” These feelings, she contends, “not only *heighten tension*, they are also *in tension*.”¹²⁴ The circulation of an array of discrepant discourses and practices about the apartment buildings or, rather, the circulation of apartment buildings as objects of discourses and emotions reveals this tension, this thickness. As much as they are hated and considered inadequate for the new post-communist social and economic environment, the apartment buildings still constitute a type of continuity in the Romanians’ lived-in worlds. They serve, to no small degree, as grounding for people’s identity and sense of stability in a world undergoing permanent and radical change. In this context, the project’s rhetoric can be considered a struggle between maintaining connections with these built structures while at the same time attempting to transform them – discursively and materially – in a way better aligned with new economic and social realities. The Magic Blocks project speaks from, through, and to this tense thickness of vacillating positions and emotions that surround the apartment buildings, enacting an architectural practice that strives to pursue and at the same time overcome the communist past. While understanding these constructions as part of the communist past, the project rationalizes the apartment buildings beyond the communist ideology, in a move that tries to dis-articulate them from the communist discourse. “I would not want this [argument] to be understood as an ideological document, as communist nostalgia that I don’t have at all. This is a matter of fact,” Ștefan told me emphasizing his words.

“A Way to Bridge the Old City to the New City”

The Magic Blocks project is not about the preservation of the past. In fact, in this particular case, the preservation of the past is not necessarily desirable – there is nothing to be proud of or to celebrate in the apartment buildings. As Ștefan pointed out during the interview, the temptation would be, rather, to erase, except that erasure is not possible. This project is, therefore, about the social re-construction of the past. It is about attending to the communist tower blocks and pursuing an understanding of them in all of their differences in order to re-constitute them for the present.

His words flowed spontaneously without me having to prod him with further questions. “In the first year [of the project], in 2009, we made an analysis of the apartment buildings’ typology because behind the idea of ‘communist apartment building’ there are many different things. Technically, both the 200,000-euro apartment building on [the big central] Unirii Boulevard and the apartment building in [the poorer neighborhood of] Rahova are communist apartment houses. But they are different in terms of location, in terms of architecture and in terms of interior space organization... One cannot consider them en masse. That’s one thing. Another thing is the public space issue. We have tried to find ideas that take into account the differences between them, on one hand, and, on the other hand, their location in the city.

“So then, in 2010, we continued this work by focusing on an issue specific to Romania and that is especially striking in Bucharest: the spaces behind the ‘curtains’ formed by the apartment buildings. You probably know very well that Bucharest is a special case, because almost all the boulevards have this veneer of apartment buildings. Someone totally new to the city would not even fathom that there is an old city behind it. They appeared in these formations because Mr. Nicu’ [Ceaușescu] wanted in fact to destroy the whole city. This was his project. Except that, like all dictators, he wanted immediate results. But he did not proceed systematically everywhere in the city, the way he had done it, for instance, in the Casa Poporului [the House of the People] area: we erase/we build. It would have taken a very long time. And he realized that maybe he would not be able to finish during his lifetime. So he chose this solution... That is, he erased the houses that were on the margins of the main city axes. That’s how these apartment buildings that hide the city behind them appeared. But the idea was to continue, in time, toward the heart of the city. In principle, however, he did not have the time to do it. And that’s why we have now this situation with big sectors of the old city enclaved behind these curtains. And between them, we have vacant lots. So we thought we should take a look at these places. After all, there are millions of square meters of public space where we could insert [some] things to bridge the old city to the new city. How to do it? These [vacant] lots are not big, it’s not easy to build on them. On the contrary, it is very difficult. And maybe those are the spaces where we can start

designing public spaces and place public equipment. To bridge... To find a way to bridge the old city to the new city, to transform the back of the city into something appealing and thus regenerate the old center behind these apartment buildings... That's what we wanted to do with this project."

The Magic Blocks project attempts to suture or re-weave the fabric of the city and/with its communities. This particular goal indicates an investment in understanding Romanian urban history, Romanians' need for community, and the current relationships between the state and its citizens in very specific ways, as well as viewing the present local configurations and possibilities in relation to more global urban practices.

First of all, the project is committed to understanding the city as a fractured structure. Boyer argues that the city's "collective forms and private realms tell us of the changes that are taking place; they remind us as well of the traditions that set this city apart from others."¹²⁵ Whether wanted or not, despised as an anomaly or regarded as an evil that has to be tolerated, the apartment buildings are deeply entangled in Bucharest's landscape. As such, they make a significant contribution to setting the capital of Romania apart from other cities. As Jameson wrote, as opposed to cities such as Paris or Budapest, which have a normative, "homogenous style," Bucharest is a city "in which 'difference relates' and the incompatible styles of different quarters, classes, and modes of life enter into an active critique of one another by way of a juxtaposition that is read as a figure or trope."¹²⁶ In the architects' project, however, the differences, instead of being appreciated for their capacity for commenting on one another, are framed as an issue. If the landscape is polysemic, as Bender put it,¹²⁷ the architects have nonetheless chosen to read it in a way that narrows the semantic field: they read the city as having been fragmented, broken, and divided by the communists' urban alterations. Ștefan talked about the old city and the new city: the new city, he argues, is made of curtains of apartment buildings

and thus hides the “old city.”¹²⁸ Overwhelmingly, discourses circulated in a multiplicity of public spheres – in the architectural community, in political debates, in everyday exchanges, in civil society, on virtual forums, and so on – present the contemporary Bucharest as the result of the radical destructions and ample urban alterations accomplished during the communist period, followed by a period of hectic and disinterested administrative measure that aggravated the city’s condition.¹²⁹ In this story, Bucharest is a wounded and traumatized body in need of care and protection. Consequently, the city needs to be mended and regenerated through urbanization projects and activities.

Addressing the fracturing between the communist city and the older city not only from a spatial, architectural perspective, but also from a social one, Magic Blocks is one of these regenerative activities. Critical of the state’s policies in regards to the apartment buildings,¹³⁰ the architects have taken it upon themselves to step into a role from which the government stepped out. As members of the civil society,¹³¹ they take the responsibility of fixing the fractures of the city through architectural practices that attempt to re-connect the “front” with the “back” of the city. In this context, they make the spatial a dimension for political action and participation.¹³² For instance, in one of the areas chosen as a case study in the project, the architects proposed a series of actions: organizing a small residential parking lot, setting bicycle and motorbike stands, further extending the green space, transforming an existing electrical post into a “pivotal’ public object supporting basketball stands,” and establishing “a bench made of wood and metal, with vertical variations (areas for seating and lying down, roller skating, skateboarding).”¹³³ These modifications imagine a space that will function “as a central

square, one enjoyed by block–and individual unit– inhabitants as well as by boulevard passers-by; it will be a place for roller skaters and basketball lovers, grandparents, teenagers in love, one where yuppies will eat their prêt-à-porter sandwiches or salads on the shaded bench.”¹³⁴

With this project, the “improper” public spaces that resulted from communist urbanization actions become objects of attention and intervention. In the disorganized vacant lots left behind by communist urbanism, the initiators of Magic Blocks literally engage in place-making. In a context in which the space of the city is commodified, bought and sold, colonized by the investments of foreign capital, “created and torn out, used and abused, speculated and fought over,”¹³⁵ the architects endeavor to make a place that sutures not only spatialities, but also temporalities and communities. They imagine this place as a “buffer between the overall public space and the private worlds within the buildings.”¹³⁶ They also imagine it as a mediator between the spaces occupied by the apartment buildings and the ones occupied by the older, pre-communist dwellings. Thus they do not only mediate between two different layers of Bucharest’s past that are usually regarded as contrasting, they mediate between the past, the present, and the future. Finally, they imagine the project as a mediator between—or rather a place of togetherness for—the socially diverse population of the city.

The future is attended to especially through this last aspect of these architectural practices. In changing ownership after 1989, the apartment buildings became a hybrid between a collective form of habitation and private property. The authors of the Magic Blocks argue that while private persons own each apartment, the ground on which the high-rises are erected and the grounds around them are a matter of collective

responsibility, even as they are not collectively owned from a legal point of view.¹³⁷ As such, they envision these transformed spaces between the buildings as communal spaces requiring participatory processes. In this vision, while the grounds around the apartment buildings would remain public domain, freely associated citizens would manage them. They consequently propose the legal establishment of the notion of “semi-public space.”¹³⁸

This “politics of propinquity”¹³⁹ imagines a communal future for the inhabitants of the city that overcomes, through the types of transformations proposed, the uncomfortable bonds of the past. Thus, the past is not pursued as fixed and inescapable, but as a catalyst for creatively thinking about the future.

Notes

¹ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 34.

² Jeffrey K Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 158. See also Kontopodis and Matera who argue that examining "memory as a doing" can bring together, but also transcend different levels of analysis (such as the individual vs. the social/collective or the local vs. the global, the semiotic vs. the corporeal). Michalis Kontopodis and Vincenzo Matera, "Doing Memory, Doing Identity: Politics of the Everyday in Contemporary Global Communities," *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies* 12, no. 2 (2010): 3.

³ Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From " Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," 112.

⁴ David Middleton and Derek Edwards, *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage, 1990), 19.

⁵ Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," 158.

⁶ Sturken, "Memory, Consumerism and Media: Reflections on the Emergence of the Field," 74.

⁷ "Tourists of History. Souvenirs, Architecture, and the Kitschification of Memory," in *Technologies of Memory*, ed. Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22. See also *Tourists of History. Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁸ Klein, for instance, notes—not without an ironic tinge—that “the new ‘materialization’ of memory thus grounds the elevation of memory to the status of a historical agent, and we enter a new age in which archives remember and statues forget.” Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* (2000): 136.

⁹ Olick notes, “no matter how concrete mnemonic products may be, they gain their reality only by being used, interpreted, and reproduced or changed.” Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," 158.

¹⁰ Blair et al. define rhetoric as “the study of discourses, events, objects, and practices that attends to their character as meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential.” Blair, "Introduction," 2.

¹¹ Stephen H Browne, "Review Essay: Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 2 (1995): 237.

¹² "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's Plymouth Rock Oration," 475.

¹³ Browne understands rhetoric in the way that it was theorized by the western traditions, as “persuasive speech in the public domains of the agora, courts, and deliberative assemblies.” Blair, "Introduction," 3.

¹⁴ Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "The Aids Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 4 (2007): 595-96.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 602-05.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 605-13.

¹⁷ Cheryl R Jorgensen-Earp and Lori A Lanzilotti, "Public Memory and Private Grief: The Construction of Shrines at the Sites of Public Tragedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 2 (1998): 154.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹ Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *ibid.* 83, no. 1 (1997): 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹ Roy Wagner as cited in Greg Dening, *Performances* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 106.

²² Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 98.

²³ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁴ Vivian, "'A Timeless Now.' Memory and Repetition," 206.

²⁵ Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," 158.

²⁶ Sue Campbell, *Relational Remembering. Rethinking the Memory Wars* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. , 2003), 51.

²⁷ See Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, 3.

²⁸ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 4.

²⁹ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, 3.

³⁰ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 60-61.

³¹ Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, "The Modalities of Nostalgia," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 6 (2006): 930.

³² Berdahl, "'(N) Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things," 198.

³³ As I mentioned with other occasions, the documentary revisits the communist factories and brands that disappeared in the years following the fall of communism in 1989. Vlad, "Metrobranding."

³⁴ For instance, in the online magazine *Historia.ro*, Elena Dumitru published on August 31 an article titled "Reinventarea brandurilor românești din 'Epoca de aur'" (Reinventing the Romanian brands from the 'Golden Age'). She inventories about 10 brands that survived the communist fall and that do well on the current market. Among them she lists the Dacia cars, the Rom chocolate, the Arctic refrigerators, and the Guban shoes. At the same time, she also reviews a number of brands that went from "market leaders" to being "simple memories."

³⁵ Jon D. Holtzman, "Food and Memory," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35(2006): 364.

³⁶ Deborah Lupton, "Food, Memory and Meaning: The Symbolic and Social Nature of Food Events," *The Sociological Review* 42, no. 4 (1994): 668.

³⁷ My discussion here is influenced by Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁸ This analysis is influenced by Christian Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 4 (2009).

³⁹ While here I offer only one example, there are multiple brands that construct their image by capitalizing on the memory of communism. A variety of products such as chocolate, beer, cognac, cars, newspapers, phones and phone services, detergent, electronics, ice cream, developed publicity campaigns that play on their own and their customers' connections with the past. For a detailed analysis of these ad campaigns, see Mădălina Moraru, "Advertising and Post-Decembrist Popular Culture in Romania," *Romanian Journal of Journalism & Communication/Revista Romana de Jurnalism si Comunicare-RRJC* 5, no. 4 (2010).

⁴⁰ Here, archival means literally "of the archive." The images were retrieved from the Romanian public television archive.

⁴¹ Constanța is a Romanian city located on the Black Sea coast. Munca [Work] Factory was one of the two Romanian factories that were bottling Pepsi during communism. The Constanța factory went bankrupt in 2005.

⁴² The song, titled “We in the year 2000” was composed in the 70s. Its lyrics speak of the continuity between generations: “We follow you with our eyes / We already know what path you build for us: / Countless flowers and palaces/ So that tomorrow we can have gold and bread. / You are heroes / But one day, us too / Us, in the year 2000, / When we will no longer be children / We will do what we had once seen. / We will transform all the daring dreams / In reality. / We will be skillful craftsmen / In order to make you, parents, happy / As in 2000 you will live your second youth.” In 2009, the song was integrated in a contemporary Romanian hip-hop song, thus re-introducing the song in cultural circulation. The success of the hip-hop song, which was played in heavy rotation on radio and TV stations, ensured a new cycle of popularity for the old tune. Pepsi capitalized on the already existing affective investments that people made in the song.

⁴³ Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," 387-88.

⁴⁴ For instance, on the Romanian trading website okazii.ro (a concept similar to both craigslist and eBay), some people sell “old Pepsi-cola bottle from the communist period,” along with other types of soda bottles characteristic of the communist period.

⁴⁵ I offer here just a few examples of books, as an exhaustive inventory is almost impossible. For instance, *The year of the pioneer* is a graphic novel that follows one year (1986) in the life of a seven-year-old (the author narrates from her childhood). The novel—illustrated with black and white drawings and—narrates in English various aspects from the everyday life in communist Romania. See Andreea Chirică, *The Year of the Pioneer* (Bucharest: Hardcomics, 2011). Similarly dealing with the everyday universe, Constantinescu’s pop-up book *The Golden Age for children* attempts to educate younger generations on the hardships of communism during Nicolae Ceaușescu. See Constantinescu, *The Golden Age for Children*. Another example is a collection of oral histories collected by the collective of the Romanian Peasant Museum. Titled *Bucharest people in the 80s*, the book features “testimonies from acquaintances, neighbors, friends, and collaborators” about life in Bucharest during the 80s. See Romanian Peasant Museum, *Anii '80 Și Bucureștenii [Bucharest People in the 80s]* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003). Another book of testimonies, *How was it? It was something like this... Memories from the years of (Romanian) communism*, gathers recollections from Romanian intellectuals. See Călin-Andrei (Ed.) Mihăilescu, *Cum Era? Cam Așa... Amintiri Din Anii Comunismului Românesc [How Was It? It Was Something Like This... Memories from the Years of (Romanian) Communism]* (București: Curtea Veche, 2006).

⁴⁶ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 50-51.

⁴⁷ David Sutton, "A Tale of Easter Ovens: Food and Collective Memory," *social research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 160.

⁴⁸ Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 101.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, the trilogy written by Matei Vișniec, *Procesul Comunismului Prin Teatru (the Trial of Communism through Theatre)* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007). In addition, Alina Nelega, *Amalia Respiră Adânc (Amalia Takes a Deep Breath)* (Bucharest: Editura Liternet, 2005); Saviana Stănescu, "Waxing West," in *The New York Plays* (South Gate: NoPassport Press, 2010); Ștefan Peca, "Romania 21," in *Romania after 2000. Five New Romanian Plays*, ed. Saviana Stănescu and Daniel Gerould (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2007).

⁵⁰ See Radu Muntean, "Hîrtia Va Fi Albastră (the Paper Will Be Blue)," (2006); Cristian Mungiu, "4 Luni, 3 Saptamâni Și 2 Zile (4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days)," (2007); Cătălin Mitulescu, "Cum Mi-Am Petrecut Sfârșitul Lumii (the Way I Spent the End of the World)," (2006); Hanno Höfer, Răzvan Mărculescu, Cristian Mungiu, Constantin Popescu, Ioana Uricaru, "Amintiri Din Epoca De Aur (Tales from the Golden Age)," (2009); Corneliu Porumboiu, "A Fost Sau N-a Fost? (12:08 East of Bucharest)," (2006); Constantin Popescu, "Portretul Luptătorului La Tinerețe (Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man)," (2010); Nae Caranfil, "Closer to the Moon," (Forthcoming); Lucian Pintilie, "Balanța (the Oak)," (1992); Titus Muntean, "Caravana Cinematografică (Kino Caravan)," (2009); Stere Gulea, "Sunt O Babă Comunistă (I Am an Old Communist Woman)," (2013).

⁵¹ For instance, Florin Iepan, "Decrețeei (Children of the Decree)," (2005); Alexandru Solomon, "Marele Jaf Comunist (Great Communist Bank Robbery)," (2004); "Război Pe Calea Undelor (Cold Waves)," (2007); Andrei Ujică, "Autobiografia Lui Nicolae Ceaușescu (the Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu)," (2010).

⁵² See, for instance, Diana Georgescu, "'Ceaușescu Hasn't Died': Irony as Counter-memory in Post-Socialist Romania," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Oana Popescu-Sandu, "'Let's All Freeze up until 2010 or So': Nostalgic Directions in Post-Communist Romania," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

⁵³ For a review of a significant number of artistic practices, see Caterina Preda, "Looking at the Past through an Artistic Lens: Art of Memorialization," *History of communism in Europe* 1(2010).

⁵⁴ For instance, especially through the mid 90s, many television stations re-ran many of the Romanian movies made during communism; in addition, these movies, together with communist patriotic and pop songs, commercials, and sequences from communist TV programs are circulated on cyberspace. These practices of circulation are quite remarkable due to their high frequency.

⁵⁵ Here Lucia makes reference to the propaganda shows that were constantly staged during communism, especially in schools. While it might seem that she relates an individual memory, the type of experience that Lucia had is common to all Romanians who went through school—even if only for one year—during the communist regime.

⁵⁶ Lucia alludes to Ceaușescu who had been repeatedly re-elected as the president of communist Romania every five years between 1965 and 1989.

⁵⁷ Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," 388.

⁵⁸ Lundberg argues, "there is an 'economy' of practices of publicness, a regularized set of exchanges where pre-existing discourses and investments in identity are presumed and remade in a public's encounter with the text." Ibid.

⁵⁹ The installation that I had seen on my way to the theatre performance discussed in the previous chapter and which drew a parallel between the House of the People and the Romanian People's Salvation Cathedral was part of this retrospective exhibition.

⁶⁰ This is an allusion to the fact that, similarly, many of the visual representations of Ceaușescu were depicting him while shaking hands with workers, engineers, or foreign dignitaries.

⁶¹ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, 3.

⁶² Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," 407.

⁶³ Iordachi, for instance, argues, "an important part of the process of political transformation [after 1989] has been the recuperation of the historical memory, especially of those aspects censored under the communist regimes." Iordachi, "'Entangled Histories:' Re-Thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective," 113.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 2.

⁶⁵ For instance, Culic writes, "It has become apparent from the account so far that history of the twentieth-century Romania has been on great demand after the fall of communism in 1989. As the propaganda apparatus of the communist regime has been fabricating and manipulating the past on a daily basis, even making use of such measures of art as editing and reprinting old newspapers in order to update to its present needs the information they conveyed, the history of communism has been urgently approached in the 1990s." Culic, "Re-Writing the History of Romania after the Fall of Communism," 14.

⁶⁶ Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit. Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 74.

⁶⁷ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics."

⁶⁸ Goodwin argues that members of a profession have a "professional vision which consists of socially organized ways of seeing and understanding events that are

answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group.” Charles Goodwin, "Professional Vision," *American anthropologist* 96, no. 3 (1994): 281.

⁶⁹ Rigney, "Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory," 17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-24.

⁷¹ For instance, remembering the communist past seems to converge around such topoi as the communist prisons (the Sighet prison with the museum that it hosts is an exemplar), but also around the figure of the pioneer. The figure of the pioneer illustrates remembering's inclination to recursivity of remembering, as it is recurrent in such various media and contexts as books, photographs, movies, or, as I discussed in my previous chapter, in re-enactments. Transfer or translation might be observed in the Sighet Museum's borrowing of forms from the Holocaust museums.

⁷² Annette Kuhn, "Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of Memory in and with Visual Media," *Memory studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 6.

⁷³ Stan argues that property restitution is one of the elements of de-communization and notes, "Post-communist Romania has had difficulty accepting property restitution as an integral component of the more general process of re-evaluating the communist past." Stan, "The Roof over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania," 202.

⁷⁴ Here, Mihai A. used the expression "oamenii muncii" which translates by "people who work" or "workers." The expression used to be part of the communist propaganda language, or the "wooden language."

⁷⁵ LaCapra, *History in Transit. Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, 72.

⁷⁶ Ciobanu, for instance, argues, "The transfer of the Securitate files to CNSAS, and of the PCR's documents to ANR, while providing easier access to sources has also stimulated a much greater interest in research into the recent past among historians, social scientists and doctoral students." Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 213.

⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995).

⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 169.

⁷⁹ Stan, "Spies, Files and Lies: Explaining the Failure of Access to Securitate Files," 343.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Ciobanu contends, "Among the most frequently requested documents for

consultation are those that serve rights for restitution such as property titles given through the agrarian reforms of 1864, 1921 and 1945, official acts that nationalized agricultural estates in 1945, and documents pertaining to properties lost by families who became refugees during World War II and who are also legally entitled to compensation.” Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 209.

⁸² Ibid., 206.

⁸³ Lavinia Stan, "The Vanishing Truth? Politics and Memory in Post-Communist Europe," *East European Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2006): 402.

⁸⁴ Culic writes, “Exerting terror and fascination, the Securitate has been a continuing presence in post-communist Romania as the esprit de corps of its former members extended its existence after its dismantling. Present in the political discourse and interaction, and in the collective representations of the population, the Securitate has been a sensitive topic of study for historians.” Culic, "Re-Writing the History of Romania after the Fall of Communism," 15.

⁸⁵ See Stan, "Spies, Files and Lies: Explaining the Failure of Access to Securitate Files."

⁸⁶ Ciobanu, for instance, offers a detailed description of the difficulties encountered by those who were awaiting to be granted access to the secret police archive: “According to Law 16 of 1996, access to the archives was limited to documents more than 30 years old, i.e. then 1966. A controversial and restrictive provision of the law referred to a 100- year sealing of documents that contained sensitive information on national security. Similarly, long-term restrictions were applied to records pertaining to some aspects of private individual lives. However, by placing the archives under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the law most importantly stripped the National Archives (ANR) of its authority and professional responsibility to receive into its custody and administer and utilize valuable historical documents related to the national patrimony. Moreover, it gave former Securitate members the opportunity to alter or remove some parts of these files. The Archives had long had an established and developed reputation for engaging in favoritism and had early adopted a secretive and hostile relationship with the public in general and those interested in consulting documents in particular.” Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 207. See also Lavinia Stan, "Access to Securitate Files: The Trials and Tribulations of a Romanian Law," *East European Politics & Societies* 16, no. 1 (2002).

⁸⁷ Cosmina Tănăsioiu, "The Tismaneanu Report: Romania Revisits Its Past," *Problems of Post-Communism* 54, no. 4 (2007): 90.

⁸⁸ Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 205.

⁸⁹ Charles E. Morris III, "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; or, the Archive's Rhetorical (Re)Turn," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 115.

⁹⁰ Ricoeur, for instance, claims that the historian is the "intended receiver" of the archival traces. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 176. LaCapra stresses the "crucial importance" of the archive to modern historiography. LaCapra, *History in Transit. Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, 24. More importantly, Stan comments on the myth according to which "the past belongs to the historian." "Only historians," the argument described by Stan goes, "are qualified to correctly assess the data gathered in secret documents. Historians alone are able to examine that information in the context of the period when it was produced, distinguish between authentic and doctored documents, evaluate the reasons behind the production of secret materials, and accurately assess the background of the agents and informers who filed the information reports." Stan, "The Vanishing Truth? Politics and Memory in Post-Communist Europe," 393-94.

⁹¹ Writing about the debate around the country's past, Ciobanu writes, "This discussion is no longer confined to political and academic circles but includes a wider spectrum of theoretical views, methodological approaches and groups represented in the society." Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 216.

⁹² Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 67.

⁹³ Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive," *Tate Papers*, no. 9 (2008).

⁹⁴ Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, 67.

⁹⁵ Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 101.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ My interviewee is referring here to the fact that the former communist elites, as well as the former secret police officers continued to be present and influential in the Romanian public life either as politicians or as businessmen. When he said that secret police officers had been "privatized," he means that former employees of the Romanian secret police are business owners. The most notorious example is Dan Voiculescu, one of the richest individuals in Romania, a media mogul who was a General in Ceaușescu's intelligence service. See also Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," 210.

⁹⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 58.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Iordachi, "'Entangled Histories.'" Re-Thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective," 122.

¹⁰¹ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 215.

¹⁰² Culic, for instance, argues, "the writing of history in communist Romania [is] shaped by political structural and institutional factors." Culic, "Re-Writing the History of Romania after the Fall of Communism," 13. Ciobanu relates how political actors have pressured the management of National Archives and how CNSAS is, in fact, a political body. Ciobanu, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues."

¹⁰³ '22 Magazine" is a well-respected weekly publication Romanian due to the fact that is edited by the Group for Social Dialogue, one of the first (if not the first) civil society organizations established in the post-communist period by a significant number of famous intellectuals, the majority of whom were former dissidents during communism.

¹⁰⁴ This is my translation of the organization's mission statement as published on its official website, www.militiaspiriruala.ro.

¹⁰⁵ This excerpt, in my translation, is cited from the official website of the organization, www.militiaspiriruala.ro, the "Press releases" section.

¹⁰⁶ Fredric Jameson, "History Lessons," in *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (Florence: Routledge, 1999), 73.

¹⁰⁷ M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory. Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Cavalcanti, "Urban Reconstruction and Autocratic Regimes: Ceaușescu's Bucharest in Its Historic Context," 85.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, the ways in which Edouwaye and Kaplan explain the goals of the Romanian socialist government and its urban policies. Flora Edouwaye and S. Kaplan, "Making and Remaking National Identities," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 162.

¹¹⁰ Ioana Sandi, "Rediscovering Romania," in *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (Florence: Routledge, 1999), 205.

¹¹¹ Visiting Bucharest, Duncan Light also notices "the ugly and poorly constructed apartment blocks that seem to overwhelm the city." Duncan Light, "'Facing the Future': Tourism and Identity-Building in Post-Socialist Romania," *Political Geography* 20, no. 8 (2001): 1068.

¹¹² Stan describes the context as follows: “Public sentiment changed after parliament adopted Law 61/ 1990 allowing three million tenants to buy state-owned apartments at advantageous prices which hyperinflation quickly rendered equivalent to a television set. The law was seen as a gesture of good will on the part of the revolutionary government, hard pressed to show commitment to a clear break with the communist past. Giving Romanians ownership rights over the apartments they had rented for so many years was a calculated move designed to attract popular support before the first free elections of May 1990, and to secure the loyalty of the industrial working class and civil servants, who primarily occupied those dwellings. Romanians were thus allowed to gain ownership rights on dwellings they could not afford if offered on the open market. In addition, the transfer of ownership rights into private hands allowed the cash-strapped state to renege on its responsibility to upgrade the decades-old apartments, which were in urgent need of reconditioning.” Stan, "The Roof over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania," 186. See also Ines Grigorescu, Mitrica, B, Mocanu, Irena, and Ticana, N, "Urban Sprawl and Residential Development in the Romanian Metropolitan Areas'," *Romania Journal of Geography* 56, no. 1 (2012): 50.

¹¹³ In some areas of Bucharest, entire business and banking districts had been developed in apartment buildings. See Duncan Light and Craig Young, "Political Identity, Public Memory and Urban Space: A Case Study of Parcul Carol I, Bucharest from 1906 to the Present," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 9 (2010): 528.

¹¹⁴ See Grigorescu, "Urban Sprawl and Residential Development in the Romanian Metropolitan Areas'," 50; Nae and Turnock, "The New Bucharest: Two Decades of Restructuring," 210.

¹¹⁵ Drazin, for instance, notes that the “explosion of private building in Romania in recent years illustrating how, given the choice, many Romanians do not feel very much at home in apartment blocks and aspire to living in houses.” Adam Drazin, "Architecture without Architects: Building Home and State in Romania," *Home Cultures* 2, no. 2 (2005): 196.

¹¹⁶ Architecture, as Dorin Ștefan put it, is “half spatial and half social.” Dorin Ștefan, "Utopia 1988ș Post-Utopia 1995, Romania," in *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (Florence: Routledge, 1999), 197.

¹¹⁷ Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory. Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, 31.

¹¹⁸ Cavalcanti, "Urban Reconstruction and Autocratic Regimes: Ceaușescu's Bucharest in Its Historic Context," 84.

¹¹⁹ Current research argues that, in fact, the socialist city was socially segregated. Moreover, it is also argued, “Decades of hardline socialist rule did not fully manage to offset the *longue durée* of the pre-war bourgeois socio-spatial structures. In fact, both the

socialist nomenklatura and the subsequent post-socialist elites cluster(ed) in areas with spacious pre-war villas and apartment buildings.” Szymon Marcińczak et al., "Urban Geographies of Hesitant Transition: Tracing Socioeconomic Segregation in Post-Ceaușescu Bucharest," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2013): 14.

¹²⁰ Gook stresses the fact that for leftist thinkers, the everyday was political, that is, it was the terrain for radical politics. He writes, “‘everyday life’ was the space of politics, art, work, labor, thought, love; a de-differentiated placed which challenged the very differentiation of these ‘moments’ (at work, at play, at home); a space of praxis, learning and production, in its fullest sense, inclusive of self-production.” Ben Gook, "Something's Always Left Over: Putting the Gdr on Film in Heise's "Material",” in *The Everyday of Memory. Between Communism and Post-Communism*, ed. Marta Rabikowska (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 114.

¹²¹ Vișan, for instance, uses Lefebvre’s theories of space to argue that the interior of the apartments were, to some extent, “safe havens against communist propaganda.” On the other hand, she also argues that there was a complex dynamic between the interior and the exterior of the everyday life in the flats and that this dynamic troubles the notion of “safe haven.” Laura Vișan, ““Partially Color”–Rethinking Exterior and Interior Spaces in Communist Romania,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 29, no. 2 (2011). See also Drazin, "Architecture without Architects: Building Home and State in Romania."

¹²² In addition, the crowdedness and imposed intimacy fostered by apartment buildings enhanced the surveillance capacity of the regime. Hannah Arendt, for instance, contends that totalitarian regimes were characterized by “a system of ubiquitous spying, where everybody may be a police agent and each individual feels himself under constant surveillance.” Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), 431.

¹²³ Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory. Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, 31.

¹²⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10-11.

¹²⁵ Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory. Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, 31.

¹²⁶ Jameson, "History Lessons," 76. Jameson, in fact, also offers a very beautiful and comprehensive description of all the building styles that make up Bucharest which I feel compelled to cite here: “Bucharest would no doubt be one of those cities, its multiple pasts still vividly inscribed in a multiplicity of built styles through which, as though heavy curtains of rain, the touring vehicle penetrates. The oldest precapitalist traces of ancient painted churches and of gypsy tracery and decoration stand shoulder to shoulder with the monumentalities of a European nineteenth century, and then the villas of a specifically Romanian art nouveau herald the successive waves of a specifically

Romanian modernism or ‘international style,’ virtually simultaneous with a specific ‘neo-Romania’ and a Romanian version of the equally international ‘fascist art’ of the period, then followed shortly by the international ‘Stalinist art’ of the immediate post-war.”

¹²⁷ Barbara Bender, "Introduction: Landscape - Meaning and Action," in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), 3.

¹²⁸ Similarly, Cavalcanti argues that the communist regime attempted to modernize the pre-existing built environment, but the erection of these apartment buildings had resulted in the overshadowing of the pre-existing townscape. Cavalcanti, "Urban Reconstruction and Autocratic Regimes: Ceaușescu's Bucharest in Its Historic Context," 84. The Romanian architect Augustin Ioan is also a vehement supporter of this notion that the communist structures “have remained without obvious connections to the city that preceded them because, through the actions of the Ceaușescu regime, the old city was doomed to vanish completely.” Ioan, "The Peculiar History of (Post)Communist Public Places and Spaces: Bucharest as a Case Study," 304.

¹²⁹ See, for instance, "Urban Policies and the Politics of Public Space in Bucharest."

¹³⁰ In the booklet issued with the project, the initiators of Magic Blocks frame the current situation they attempt to address/redress in the following manner: The economic post-communist transformations, they argue, “led to ‘turbo urbanism,’ the de-formalization of urban space that results from unfettered neo-liberal capitalism and all of its concomitant phenomena. Cities were overwhelmed by new construction booms, ranging from questionable investment projects in downtown areas to the large quantity of informal, private housing developments, generally on the urban periphery. Characteristically, these booms occurred with weak city oversight, or even an outright lack of regulation. Even in the case of “collective buildings,” community property was privatized—something that was happening almost everywhere else in Eastern Europe—and the new owners were mostly left to fend for themselves. Governments quickly unburdened themselves of their social responsibilities.” Ștefan Ghenciulescu, Constantin Goagea, and Kai Vöckler, ed. *Magic Blocks. Scenarios for Socialist Collective Housing Estates in Bucharest* (Bucharest: Zeppelin, 2009), 12.

¹³¹ The project was initiated and coordinated by Archis Interventions, Zeppelin, Point 4, and Architectura, which are a mix of professional and activist associations.

¹³² Massey, for instance, draws attention to the fact that “the spatial is political.” Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2005), 9. More specifically, Staiger argues, “as the city emerges as a strategic site for new agents and scenes for claim-formation, issues of legitimacy, participation and citizenship can be recast in specifically urban terms.” Staiger, "Cities, Citizenship, Contested Cultures: Berlin's Palace of the Republic and the Politics of the Public Sphere," 312.

¹³³ Ghenciulescu, *Magic Blocks. Scenarios for Socialist Collective Housing Estates in Bucharest*, 63.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹³⁵ Merrifield, "Henri Lefebvre: A Socialist Space," in *Thinking Space*, ed. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (London: Routledge, 2000), 173.

¹³⁶ Ghenciulescu, *Magic Blocks. Scenarios for Socialist Collective Housing Estates in Bucharest*, 68.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

¹³⁹ This term is linked with the “new urbanism” developed in the United States. But the language of my interviewee, the language of the project, as well as Ștefan’s direct mention that apartment buildings are, maybe, an alternative to the suburbs (predicated as ecological solution by the “new urbanism”) suggests that the use of this term in this context is perfectly legitimate. Dean Maccannell, ""New Urbanism" and Its Discontents," in *Giving Ground: The Politics of Propinquity*, ed. Joan Copjec and Michael Sorkin (London: Verso, 1999).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.

REVISITING REMEMBERING

“Understanding of the past embraces all modes of exploration.”

David Lowenthal

*“The creation of meaning shares
the rhythm of man’s active and productive life.”*

Roy Wagner

Introduction

This work used grounded theory methods to explore the practices of remembering communism in Romania in order to address the ways in which activities of memory arise from, impact, and are enmeshed into the everyday lives of individuals as they engage the city, their profession, and their personal relationships.

Relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present, and pursuing the past are three distinct but interrelated themes that were embedded in the conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of my data. Given the relative variety of life domains reached by my analysis (history, architecture, art, civil society, and urban life more generally), they represent a sort of trans-situational snapshot of the process of remembering communism. As with all snapshots, even as the focus is on movement, practices, and activities, this analysis captures a specific moment in time, a moment that is characterized by an energetic salience of the past. As explained in the introduction and exemplified throughout the previous chapters, the past’s salience appears as the effect of several interrelated factors: its temporal proximity (as illustrated by the idea of “recent history”), people’s organic connections to it (people who directly experienced the

communist past are still around to share their memories), and its material persistence (as seen, for example, in the House of the People, the apartment buildings, abandoned factory buildings, and the communist brands). In addition, the communist past's closeness in time, the living, speaking bodies that recall it, and the abundance of material traces that survive in the shared space of the city contribute to strong affective investments in the past, imbuing its salience in the present with a distinctive intimacy.

This constellation of factors nourishes particular relationships to the past. My analysis assembles these along three axes, or themes: relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present, and pursuing the past. These axes are not only generated by, but also perpetuate the prominence of the communist history/memory in Romania in the current moment. These themes draw attention to, and attempt to specify, a variety of activities that participate in the dynamic exchange between past and present. They also, more importantly, attend to the modalities through which the past is constituted and recognized as a presence. As such, they name and explain living relationships to the past.

In what follows, I revisit the three themes and the conceptual categories that generated them in order to review and synthesize them. In the process, I address the ways in which these conceptualizations enter into existing theoretical conversations and to the contributions they make to an understanding of the process of remembering. In doing so, I advance a definition of remembering derived from my analysis. I conclude with a discussion of the questions that linger in the aftermath of this investigation and suggest directions for future research. This work of evaluation will also continue in the next

chapter, where I will specifically address the contributions that this work makes, and the challenges it poses, to rhetorical theory and practice.

Relating the Present to the Past Revisited

Comparing the present to the past, explaining the present in terms of the past, and defining identity in relation to the past emerged as conceptual categories revolving around the idea of establishing rapports between the present and the past.

To compare the present to the past is to examine the contrasts and similarities between the communist past and the present. Some of my interviewees expressed the opinion that certain things are better now than they were during communism: “Now I can express myself freely,” a taxi driver told me. Others pointed to things that were worse: “I think that people were then, at least in the early 80s, happy. But now Romanians are not happy,” one of my interviewees believed. Through these contrasts some qualities of the present are evaluated in relation to the communist past. In this manner, *relations of ascendancy*—of the present over the past and of the past over the present—are established. On the other hand, when interviewees reported that some aspects of the present were “just like during communism,” a *relation of equality* was instituted between the (communist) past and the present. This conceptual category emphasizes remembering as an evaluative practice accomplished by placing the present and the past side by side and, in doing so, constructing relations of ascendancy and/or equality between them. Through these movements of contrasting and finding similarities, both the present and past are reshaped and reconstructed.

To explain the present in terms of the past is to render the present either as a *consequence* or *continuity* of the (communist) past. “Many things do not work well

because of how it was before,” one of my informants related, thus suggesting that the present was “caused” by the past. In these instances, the present is often perceived as a prolongation of the past, as in the following interview excerpt: “I think it’s about a continuity. In 1989, those people [the communists, the secret police officers, the regime’s people] did not go home.” This conceptual category calls attention to remembering as a process of accounting for and constituting the present in terms of the past, a process that is accomplished through relations of consequentiality and continuity between the past and the present.

Defining identity in terms of the past has two subcategories: defining Romanian identity and defining generational identity. To define identity in terms of the past is to use elements of the (communist) past in the description of the Romanian nation or of a certain generation. Whether positive (“Communist products differentiate us from the mass-production,” an acquaintance said with some satisfaction), negative (“We carry communism’s genetic information,” one of my participants told me, implying that “we” were doomed), or neutral (“Communist things are Romanian things,” I recorded after a terse encounter with a hurried bar owner), the depiction of the Romanian nation through some aspects of the (communist) past conveys a *relation of equivalence* between the current identity of the nation and the (communist) past. In defining generational identity in relation to the communist past the emphasis is on a *relation of contingency* with a specific time. When one of the participants in my research stated, “For me, our generation means those people who are born before ‘81, those who got to live a little under communism and have memories...” he claimed membership in a generation by virtue of having lived through a specific period of the communist era. “Our generation” is

specified by virtue of having been physically/biologically in touch with a particular period under communism. This conceptual category focuses on remembering as a mode of describing and delineating identity by establishing relations of contingency and contiguity between the past and the present.

All these conceptual categories bring together relationships between the present and the past. I chose to label the theme embedded in these categories “relating the present to the past” for at least two reasons. First, the double meaning of the verb “relate” allowed the analysis of the concepts and of the relationship between them to remain open, while at the same time precise. “To relate” is both to construct and establish relations (between present and past) and to give an account (of the present through the past).

The theme of “relating the present to the past” clearly relates to collective memory studies’ concerns with and theorizations regarding the dynamic relationships between present and past. In addition, it offers specific ways of thinking about how these relations are established in practice. As discussed in the first chapter, collective memory scholarship primarily emphasizes two distinct but interrelated ways of explaining the dependency of the past on the present. The first one, promoted especially by Mead, emphasizes an epistemological limitation: the past can only be known from the point of view of the present.¹ The second emphasizes a political, ideological manipulation: the past is a vehicle for particular agendas of the present.² These renderings underscore a view of the past and its remembering not as a retrieval, but as a re/construction fashioned by the present. Schudson, however, argues that the ways in which “the present shapes our understanding of the past” should be complemented with thinking about how “the past shapes the present.”³

On a descriptive level, the theme “relating the present to the past” and the conceptual categories it subsumes depict the attempts made by participants in the culture to understand the relationship between Romania’s communist past and present. Their accounts express how the communist past has produced some—if not all— aspects of the present. In addition, some of the ways the past and present are seen in relation to each other—especially the past as continuity, contiguity, or contingency—reflect the struggle to completely separate the present from the past. As explained in the introduction to this section, and also in the first chapter, this is characteristic of a past that is still relatively “fresh.”

On a more theoretical level, my exploration of this theme—as it emerges from my research in Romania—reveals that the present and the past mutually shape each other through rather minute operations that construct a variety of relationships between the present and past. In other words, my analysis suggests that at any given time, the “syntax” of remembering or, perhaps, the geometry of remembering, in a particular culture is quite rich and complex. I have highlighted relations of ascendancy, equality, consequentiality, continuity, contingency and contiguity, which suggest the existence of a variety of “combinatory” possibilities between present and past. These relationships might help to develop more nuanced understandings of how the past is used for the agendas of the present, how the past is intelligible only from the point of view of the present, or how the past shapes the present.

Sustaining the Past in the Present Revisited

Preserving communist objects, invoking nostalgia, fancying the past in the present, re-enacting communism, using communism for cultural production, communism

speak, and conversing on communism emerged as conceptual categories that revolve around the idea of maintaining the awareness of the (communist) past in the present.

Preserving communist objects describes how people hold on to material leftovers (objects) from communism. Various degrees of effort are invested in this practice, from simply “keeping possession of” or not throwing away material items, to intentionally salvaging, and/or collecting. By engaging in such practices, the participants in the culture deem the objects of their preservation to be meaningful. The significance of these objects, as explained in Chapter 4, is the result of a recursive relation between personal and public investments. One example offered was that of the pioneer scarf. While some individuals hold on to their pioneer scarf in the privacy of their homes, others display it in public as a sign of either aesthetic eccentricity (the hipster) or political engagement (the man displaying the scarf in the Romanian Parliament). The rhetorical salience of the pioneer scarf emerges for and from both private and public gestures in a cultural context that circulates multiple and diverse discourses, objects, events, and practices in relation to the pioneer scarf. The concept of preserving objects from the (communist) past draws attention to the ways in which individual, smaller practices both emerge from and contribute to more public practices and spheres.

Invoking nostalgia for communism depicts how people conspicuously address their own nostalgia and nostalgic practices. In openly acknowledging or rejecting nostalgia, people call forth their involvement with the past, as well as their position or engagement with the normative discourses on remembering the communist past. As discussed in Chapter 4, this concept brings forth issues related to the acceptability of displaying nostalgia in private and public spaces and the political stakes involved in

labeling certain behaviors as nostalgic. To argue for or against nostalgia for the communist past is then to keep in mind the contested, problematic nature of practices of remembering communism, as well as the fact that these practices are always under public scrutiny. The conceptual category of arguing nostalgia (for communism) underscores the ways in which certain normativities of the culture are already built into the ways we engage the past, especially in the public space.

Fancying the communist past in the present captures expressions of the desire for things of the past to return in the present or expressions of satisfaction that things from the past are not entirely gone. Thus, it renders some aspects of the past as viable and/or desirable in the present; it conveys the idea that certain features of the past are kept in mind as alternatives to the present. For instance, Marius S. stated, “I like this idea of the pioneer, and pioneer scarf. And if I could... not that I would impose... But I would give children the possibility to identify with a certain... with a certain style, a certain symbolism – in terms of clothing, that is.” While such an instance can be read as a desire for restoring the past, “fancying” is, in fact, an imaginative effort to re-cast, re-constitute, and re-configure elements of the old world into the new one. The concept of fancying the (communist) past in the present draws attention to the fact that dwelling on the past can acquire reflexive, imaginative nuances.

Rehearsing communism assembles instances in which people in the culture use their bodies to rehearse or reenact certain practices from the communist period. The pioneer salute re-enacted by Lucia and her friend at the pioneer music concert is an example of a small, rehearsed gesture, while the pioneer music concert itself is a more elaborate staging. In addition to varying in magnitude, the concept of re-enacting

communism also differs along the dimension of publicness: the pioneer music concert was open to all purchasing tickets, but the “communist bash” in which Lucia’s friend participated was a private party. This choice of privacy could be related to how public displays of nostalgia for communism are scrutinized and judged as un/acceptable performances. Thus, the concept of rehearsing the (communist) past attends to the performative dimension of remembering; it emphasizes the *doing* of remembering and focuses attention on the processes of recalling as they occur in the body or, at least, somewhere in between mind and body.

Using communism for cultural production assembles the instances in which the communist past—the history of communism or the aesthetics of communism—is used for creating cultural goods in the present. This practice—enacted, for instance, in the performance “X mm from Y km,” or in the Atelier Mecanic bar—participates in keeping an awareness of the communist past alive; in addition, through the resulting cultural products, it offers stimuli and topics that add to and sustain ongoing public conversations regarding the communist past. In my analysis, the concept of using communism for cultural production switches the focus from the cultural products and representations themselves to the practices that allow such products and representations to exist in the first place.

Communismspeak labels the instances when language reminiscent of communism is used. Communismspeak incorporates both uses of the wooden language of communism and of communist toponymy. Using wooden language refers to the occasions when people use or recognize others’ uses of propaganda language from the communist period. As described in Chapter 4, this category varies in its earnestness: for some people, the use

of wooden language is part of their personae and thus is taken seriously, while others engage in this way of speaking in an ironic or playful manner. Either way, speaking in a communist style inserts the voices of the past into the present, thus supporting and integrating them with the present everyday life. Similarly, using communist toponymy—that is, using the old communist names for places in the city—maintains, via language, an awareness of the communist past. Calling different places in the city by their former communist names contributes to keeping the memory of the past alive in the present. Subsuming these two categories, the concept of communismspeak draws attention to spoken language as a domain that fosters and nurtures the remembering of the past through re-enactments of speaking styles.

Conversing about communism depicts the practices of having conversations about communism; it comprises the ways in which people arrive at this topic of conversation and the ways in which these conversations are carried out. To have conversations about communism is to keep the communist past as an integral part of everyday life. My participants described having informal exchanges with friends, colleagues, and acquaintances in which the topic of communism, or memories of the communist past, somehow slipped into the conversation. This appearance of the communist past in daily exchanges is an effect of a surrounding cultural and physical environment already busy with remembering communism. In such an environment, communism animates everyday topics of debate. Everyday conversations about communism, however, are not only an effect of this environment; they also participate in its construction and, as a result, perpetuate the existence of the communist past through daily, mundane engagements. As with the concept of communismspeak, the concept of conversing about the (communist)

past draws attention to everyday communicative exchanges as a field that allows and promotes the cultivation of memories about the past.

All the conceptual categories described above cluster around the idea that certain discourses, objects, events, and practices work—in different ways, but together—to support the past as a presence integrated into everyday life. The semantic field of “sustaining” is able to capture the commonalities of these conceptual categories, as “to sustain” means to preserve, keep on, keep going, save, maintain, cultivate, and nourish. It is in these senses that I advance the theme of “sustaining the present in the past.” The theme represents a collection of practices and activities, objects and events, discourses and performances that keeps the past present through various modalities: as an object in the house or a clothing item displayed in the street; as an open engagement with nostalgia or a firm rejection of it; as a vision of the present incorporating elements of the past; as a music concert or a small gesture; as a movie or a comic-book; as a speech style or a topic of conversation.

On a more descriptive level, this theme attends to the ways in which participants in the culture make the past and its remembering a part of their lived world. It also reveals how remembering practices occur, quite frequently, outside formal or official frameworks. On a more theoretical level, this theme enters into a dialogue with scholarship that understands memory – as Pierre Nora does – as being relegated to “lieux de memoire.” It also challenges the idea that “actively circulated memory that keeps the past present” can only be inscribed through canonical forms, as Aleida Assmann argues.⁴ The practices described by the above conceptual categories suggest the contours of a complex and rich environment of memory, without, however, suggesting enduring

cultural formations. A view of remembering as a process solely solidified and secluded in discrete places becomes less plausible with these diverse activities in view. Even as some places of remembering might have the ambition of secluding and solidifying memories, and of rendering them normative, when considered from the perspective of these smaller, localized, contingent practices, remembering appears not as the unilateral activity of one representation or another, of one museum or another, or of one single practice or another. Remembering appears as the cumulative effect of multiple activities that emerge from different areas of life, that circulate across different domains of existence, and that influence and reconfigure one other.

Pursuing the Past Revisited

Consuming communist food products, audiencing communism, interest in communism, and communism as occupation emerged as conceptual categories that revolve around the idea of remembering as a quest for the past.

Buying communist food products captures the active search for and consumption of food products reminiscent of communism. This aspect is related to a broader range of practices connected to the consumption of “communist brands,” that is, those brands that used to be produced by the communist economy and that endured through the fall of communism and the new economic relationships of the post-communist period. In Chapter 5, “consuming communist food products” is analyzed as a practice that crisscrosses and thus blurs the boundaries between private and public modes of remembering. It is also analyzed as a practice in which remembering offers a competitive advantage: in their competition on the free-market economy, the advantage of the “communist” goods is precisely their link to the past or, more exactly, to people’s

affective investments in these products. This conceptual category emphasizes remembering as a sensory practice and addresses the links between practices of food consumption and processes of remembering, as well as the connections between remembering and consumption practices more generally.

Audiencing cultural productions recalling the communist past calls attention to how people are present for and pay attention to cultural discourses, events, objects, and or/practices that recall the communist era. “Audiencing” refers to individuals’ willingness to engage cultural productions related to the past and thus explores the idea that publics, instead of being called by such productions, are going toward/after them. That is, it draws attention to how publics themselves make motions toward rhetorical creations that remember communism, rather than simply being enticed by them. This conceptual category switches the focus—once again—from cultural productions to people’s engagement with them, thus marking people’s readiness for and interest in attending to such cultural productions and activities.

Interest in communism captures the active search for the past by the participants in the culture. To be interested in communism is to follow the communist past persistently or to seek to become acquainted with it, especially through historical accounts. Many of my interviewees directly stated their interest in reading or “finding out about communism” and they also demonstrated knowledge acquired by attending to accounts of communist history. In my analysis (see Chapter 5), I connected this interest with a perceived scarcity of memory/history related to the communist past. Thus, interest in communism emerges as a response to the void created by the communist regime’s manipulation and hiding of its own history. This conceptual category brings attention to

remembering as an active search for the past rather than as a retrieval or recuperation of memory.

The communist past as occupation recognizes people's involvement with and search for the past as a component of their profession. By virtue of their profession, some people—such as the historians I interviewed—have a continuous, day-to-day engagement with the communist past. Other people—such as the architect I encountered—have only occasional, project-to-project engagements with the communist past. This conceptual category emphasizes the past and its remembering as activities deeply embedded in people's lives. It also suggests that working with the past is connected with systems of monetary and symbolic rewards that further entangle remembering in both individual and public everyday life.

The conceptual categories described above cluster around the idea of pursuing the communist past, an idea which stresses the activities, movements, and energies that are often involved in remembering. On a more descriptive level, this theme depicts how participants in the culture invest in seeking out the communist past; pursuing the (communist) past is a necessity that responds to a void. On a more theoretical level, this theme converses with literature in collective memory that draws attention to remembering as an active search,⁵ or work.⁶ My exploration of this theme reveals this active search as it is carried out, not only by the professionals who devote their careers to the past, but also by other categories of people through specific practices deliberately devoted to the past. While the pursuit of the past is something often associated with historians or archeologists and their accompanying practices, my analysis reveals a broader array of people and practices associated with the quest for the past. This diversity

of practices not only offers different perspectives on the past, it also multiplies the aspects of the past that are pursued, contributing to the multiplicity of ways in which the past is known. As argued in Chapter 5, there is a discrepancy between, for instance, consuming communist food products and interest in communism, as the former is understood as nostalgia, while the latter is considered to be a “serious” curiosity about history. Both, however, are means by which communism is pursued, thus indicating a connection between more sensuous ways of remembering and more analytical modalities of memory.

Remembering Revisited

Relating the present to the past reveals that the participants in the culture do not see the past and the present as completely separate entities—a perception required for the type of historical consciousness that Nora theorizes as a condition that causes memory to be moved into places. Instead, sustaining the past in the present comprises a series of activities that keep the past alive in the present without clearly identifiable elements of a canon. Furthermore, pursuing the past suggests that knowing and searching for the past are necessities in the Romanian context, given the lack of a clear factual basis on which history can become memory – which is how Jan Assmann describes the creation of cultural memory.⁷

Over the course of my analysis I engaged in various ways the issue of stable topoi of remembering. Such notions as places of memory (as defined by Nora) or cultural memories (as defined by Jan Assmann), which convey relatively fixed, quickly noticeable, and collectively shared engagements with memory, are not quite suitable for describing the remembering of communism in Romania. During my analysis I suggested

that in Romania, such stable formations are not yet crystalized; instead, the culture is in the process of inventing and selecting these formations. During the discussion on “relating the present to the past” I questioned the live/mediated opposition, explaining how both live and mediated forms of memory can co-exist, thus placing the two terms of the opposition into a dynamic interaction. I also suggested that the abundance of remembering activities in which Romanians participate reflects a particular moment in time. As such, some of these practices might further explain, in the future, how some topoi have been chosen over others. Jan Assmann argues that cultural memory is a selection of “fixed points,” which are “fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).”⁸ He defines cultural memory in opposition to “communicative memory,” which cannot offer “fixity” because it is short-lived. The horizon of communicative memory, according to Assmann, “does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past.”⁹ This mode of theorizing cultural memory resonates with Aleida Assmann’s idea of “the canon,” which is also characterized by great endurance – she refers to it as “a timeless framework.”¹⁰ According to this line of argumentation, memories of communism in Romania are too recent to have produced canonical or cultural memories. Thus, it can be inferred that this analysis captures a unique moment in time, in which the ties and intimacies between the present and the (communist) past are somewhat strong; in which a busy and rather hectic milieu of remembering does not revolve (primarily) around firmly sedimented discourses, events, objects, or practices; and in which the historical past is still undetermined and needs to be pursued. But, as my discussion of the theme “sustaining the past in the

present” suggests, the past can be maintained in the present even without “timeless” or “fixed” elements of memory. In addition, Vivian suggests that some memories and memory practices simply “do not aspire to the iconic authority so often denoted by civic monuments or memorials.”¹¹ Thus, it can be inferred that this analysis offers a unique understanding of remembering as a process that is not (only) tied to formal, self-conscious, and prototypical ways of remembering such as museums, memorials, or commemorations.

From the themes and the conceptual categories advanced here, remembering emerges as a complex, meaningful, contingent, and rather cluttered process through which the past is related to, sustained in, and pursued in the present through practices embedded in everyday life. Remembering is a complex and cluttered process because, in the ecology of remembering, various ways of remembering coexist and are intertwined. In addition, the complexity and the untidiness of remembering is the effect of its circulation and oscillation between multiple domains of life. Finally, the intricacy of remembering is an effect of the contingencies, fluidities, and circular dynamics that characterize the process of remembering. For instance, the sensuous and the emotional exist side by side and are blended with the economic and the political, as in the consumption of communist food products; habitual and bodily recollection mixes with more intentional and analytical ways of remembering, as in the concept of rehearsing communism; individual and private aspects of remembering are compounded with collective and public modalities, as in the concept of preserving the past; and the political and the nostalgic are fused, as in the concept of arguing nostalgia. As demonstrated in my discussion of the theme relating the present to the past, the idea of the continuity of the

past in the present is constructed through the accumulation and concerted effects of discourses that come from and spill into multiple areas of life, from everyday exchanges to discourses in the public and professional spheres.

The features of the definition of remembering offered here—the blurring of boundaries between ways of remembering, the entanglement with the everyday, and the embeddedness in practices—directly result from my methodological approach to the field of remembering. The conceptual categories and the subsequent themes that emerged from my ethnography did not attend to the significance or the effect of a particular text, place, artifact, or memorial genre. As explained in the methodology section, my research did not focus on specialized memorial or commemorative acts and artifacts. Instead, I arrived at these concepts and themes through the careful analysis (accomplished through coding and constant comparison) of a variety of fragments – instances of interviews, observations of embodied situations and spatial arrangements in the city, media, and cultural texts – that were pointing in the same direction. As a consequence, these conceptual categories occurred as features embedded in various manifestations of the larger culture, not in a definite number of rhetorical instantiations. More exactly, they identify broader currents lodged in a multiplicity of discourses, objects, events, and practices. The features of the culture covered by these concepts acquire rhetorical salience precisely as a consequence of this multiplicity of seemingly disparate fragments that accomplish the same task: relating the present to the past, sustaining the past in the present, or pursuing the past. Moreover, because they are not limited to particular genres, representations, or practices of memory, these conceptual categories are able to approach remembering in a way that traverses oppositions such as individual/collective,

private/public, and unintentional/self-conscious forms of memory. In addition, as I explained in my methodology section, my deliberate coding in the gerund mode oriented me toward activities, actions, and processes.

Olick argues, “Collective memory is something – or rather many things – we do, not something we have. We therefore need analytical tools sensitive to its varieties, contradictions, and dynamism.”¹² I offer the conceptual categories and themes advanced here as a blueprint for building a vocabulary that allows us to engage with but at the same time transcend binary formations such as individual/collective, private/public, unintentional/self-conscious, and historical/nostalgic, as well as the political/social/cultural compartmentalization common that is common in theories of remembering.

Lingering Questions and Further Research

It is my hope that my exploration of the remembering process and its entanglements with everyday life has productively conversed with larger theoretical concerns, offered valuable insight, and proposed a useful conceptual vocabulary. Inevitably, however, my investigation also leaves some questions unanswered because, in focusing on certain issues, my analysis has ignored or under-attended to others, thus opening spaces for further research. In what follows, I will suggest some of these possibilities as they materialize from each analytical chapter, as well as from the entire endeavor.

While exploring the theme of relating the present to the past, I noted that the ways of conceiving the relationships between present and past traverse diverse areas of life. The rhetorical force of certain modalities of remembering, I argued, comes from their

distribution across and movement through multiple life domains; it comes from their concerted activity in all these areas. A similar insight resulted from the third chapter, where I demonstrated that the activity of pursuing the past is an ensemble of activities that cross multiple areas of life. By focusing on the commonalities of these practices, however, I may have left differences between them insufficiently addressed.

Furthermore, although some answers were suggested, further attention could be paid to the question of why the types of remembering practices analyzed here circulate. What makes them circulate? What makes them appear in such various contexts? How do the practices and the languages of each context inflect the themes I have articulated? What are the consequences of these themes on these contexts, how do they transform the field where they circulate? How—if at all—is a theme returned to the larger public spheres and with what consequences?

The activities described in the third chapter reveal additional challenging problematics. Pursuing the past is practiced by a variety of people in multiple ways (through consumption, through audiencing cultural products, and through paying attention to historical accounts), rather than being limited to professions traditionally charged with attending to the past (like those of historians or archeologists). Especially significant is the issue of the how diverse ways of knowing and pursuing the past—such as those that are embodied in food consumption—relate to the ways of knowing and pursuing the past that are implicated in the practices of the historians. In other words, how does the sensuous, nostalgic pursuit of communism dialogue with and influence historical practices and meanings? What are the ways in which historical practices and interests in

communism are constructed as more meaningful, while practices of consumption are dismissed as nostalgic indulgence?

Returning to the issue of what makes the themes circulate, one of the answers I suggested was inspired by Edbauer's concept of rhetorical ecologies, which she defines as "co-ordinating processes, moving across and within shared structures of feeling."¹³ Thus, in concluding the fourth chapter, I proposed that the circulation of various modalities of relating the present to the past across and within different contexts is likely enabled by certain shared structures of feeling that make discourses and practices valid and appealing in multiple locations. In subsequent chapters I continued to pursue, more occasionally than systematically, connections between "feeling," remembering, and rhetorical practices. These connections deserve more methodical investigation. Blair et al. argue that while exploring the connections between affect and public memory, rhetorical scholars should be concerned with such questions as: "what makes it [the memory] stick? how? and with what effects?"¹⁴ My exploration indicates a set of additional questions: What shared structures of feeling make memories circulate? How do affective investments enable the production and reproduction of certain practices? What is the contribution of these affective investments to the production of more stable (over long periods of time) topoi of remembering?

As mentioned in the preceding section, for the Romanian context, in which the experience of communism is relatively recent, stable topoi of remembering are a less prominent feature of the ecology of remembering. This research might be helpful for a project of historicizing the memory of communism, as my analysis registers significant aspects of a stage in the process of congealing highly meaningful and shared forms of

remembering. Thus, future research might ask to what extent the conceptual categories and the themes presented here have survived over time. If they survived, how were they transformed by the passing of time, and how do they appear in relation to new contexts? Did these practices contribute to or hinder in any way the solidification of some configurations of remembering that proved to be more stable over time? If such practices endured, how do they relate to the more stable configurations of remembering?

While helpful in registering a unique moment in the process of remembering communism in Romania, useful for engaging a number of theoretical issues, and effective for stressing a series of facets underexplored in public/collective memory studies, the themes advanced here focus preeminently on some aspects while neglecting others. For example, what happens when the past is *not* related, sustained, or pursued is insufficiently addressed here. Further depth could be added to the categories of relating, sustaining, and pursuing through questions such as: How do participants in the culture dissociate the present from the past? How do they hinder, obscure, or reject the past? And how do they ignore, forget, or neglect the past? Or, more generally, what are the practices and conditions that work to attenuate the prominence of the communist past? My research hints at the ways in which some of the conceptual categories and themes are, to some extent, a response to practices situated at the opposite end of the spectrum. For instance, the historian I interviewed who spoke about the “goldfish memory” of the Romanian people implied that his own pursuit of the past and the effort to make it public was intended as a remedy for the people’s perceived propensity to forget. In a similar manner, the designer of Atelier Mecanic, the bar I discussed in Chapter 5, spoke about Romanians’ disregard for preserving the past, insisting that his salvaging of the factory

equipment featured in the bar was a movement to counter this neglect. These and other examples that appear throughout my analytical chapters suggest that further exploration is needed of the dynamics and entanglements between the figures of relating, sustaining, and pursuing and their negative counterparts.

One other area that remains under-attended in my analysis is the relationship between the communist past and the other pasts and memories circulating in Romanian culture, because the focus of the present project was to explore how people encounter and participate in the process of remembering communism in everyday life. But the rapports between engagements with the communist past and engagements with the larger past are valuable for understanding the total ecology of memory and the role of remembering communism in this ecology. My first chapter offers a discussion of how remembering communism is positioned in relation to the ways in which Romanians remember their larger past, and I provide additional details about and clues to these connections throughout my analytical chapters. For instance, I touch upon these dynamics while discussing the demolition of the 19th-century farmers' market, the old houses that are repurposed by businesses and protected by local authorities, and the dilemmas and difficulties encountered in revising the history received from the communist regime. These disparate moments, however, do not add up to a well-organized examination of the dynamics between remembering communism and remembering other pasts. Thus, further research would benefit from addressing these issues in a more systematic manner.

Finally, I want to stress one further avenue for additional research. Although I touched on the idea that some generations are defined in relation to the communist past, I have not methodically pursued variances in remembering practices that arise from age

differences, social and economic locations, or that are correlated to gender. Age, social and economic positions, and gender are some of the factors that significantly inflect remembering and explorations that would consider them more closely should be marked as imperative on an agenda for further research.

The conceptualizations that emerged from the present analysis, as well as the lingering questions and spaces left open for further research sketch the contours of a specific research program. This research program aims at understanding and exploring the process of remembering as integral to and entangled with everyday life; as embedded in and connected with a web of practices and relationships; as constituted and animated by an interplay between individual and collective/public activities; and as composed of and equally inflected by various modalities of remembering, including the sensorial, the bodily, the affective, the historical, the cultural, the social, and the political. My work thus seeks a more global understanding of remembering that could address and work through these dynamic complexities.

Notes

¹ Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present*, 30.

² Young, for instance, writes, "memory is never shaped in a vacuum; the motives of memory are never pure." Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 2-3.

³ Schudson, "The Past in the Present Versus the Present in the Past," 290.

⁴ Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 98.

⁵ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*; Huysen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*.

⁶ Kuhn, "Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of Memory in and with Visual Media."

⁷ Jan Assmann writes, "cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth." Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 38.

⁸ "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 129.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰ Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 101.

¹¹ Vivian, "'A Timeless Now.' Memory and Repetition," 190.

¹² Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," 159.

¹³ Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," 20.

¹⁴ Blair, "Introduction," 16.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RHETORIC
RHETORIC, PUBLIC MEMORY, AND QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

Introduction

In the last five or six years, scholars in the field of rhetoric have engaged in a vibrant discussion on the adoption of ethnographic methods or “rhetorical field methods.” The work presented here is an attempt to perform a qualitative study with implications for the larger field of rhetoric. So far, ethnographic approaches have been understood as “mere” techniques, but, as Walcott would ask, “*When does method become A METHOD?*”¹ In other words, this is not, of course, a strictly methodological discussion, as it has implications for and riches deep into such questions as: What are the rhetorical transactions that we should heed? What are the aspects of rhetoric we should engage? How do we conceive of rhetoric? And, ultimately, what is the role of the critic? I point to these questions because I want to suggest some answers and, more importantly, because I want to underscore the challenges posed and the transformations foreshadowed by rhetorical studies’ conversations with ethnography.

In an effort to expand the horizon of rhetorical studies beyond textual analysis, scholars turn to the everyday and to the vernacular,² and to space,³ materiality, and bodies⁴ as fields and topics of significance for their inquiries into the nature and workings of rhetoric. Some of the scholars interested in these issues embrace ethnographic methods as a necessary means of gaining access to “the micropractices of moment-by-moment interactions”⁵ or, more generally, to discourses that “are left out of traditional written records.”⁶ For these scholars, ethnographic fieldwork is also understood as a methodology that better facilitates the realization of the critical rhetoric agenda⁷

articulated by such scholars as McKerrow,⁸ McGee,⁹ and Ono and Sloop.¹⁰ For instance, scholars working in the area of social movements, public sphere, and counterpublics have used ethnographic methods to examine the inventional resources of local communities¹¹; to investigate rhetorical work that happens “behind the scenes,” in the counterpublics’ “protected enclaves”¹²; and to see “deliberation as it occurs” in order to enact criticism as advocacy.¹³ Finally, ethnographic methods are appreciated for their potential to assist rhetorical scholars in more fully attending to such issues as materiality, bodies,¹⁴ and audience engagement.¹⁵

Some rhetorical scholars have received this move toward ethnographic research with excitement. For instance, Hauser enthusiastically posits that “observational studies using methodologies of participant observation” would take “rhetorical criticism in an empirical direction.”¹⁶ Similarly, Middleton et al. welcome the fact that rhetorical work supported by ethnographic methods has become a rather wide practice in rhetorical studies. At the same time, however, they argue that critics “fail to explicate their methods in ways that allow for critical scrutiny and development.”¹⁷ In what follows, I expand on these discussions by focusing on the possibilities opened by using a qualitative approach in rhetorical studies and also the transformations required by such work. My insights are based on my own research in the area of public memory, so in constructing my arguments I will mostly rely on literature from this area of study and I will provide illustrations from my own inquiries into remembering practices.

I start by a detailed discussion of how interest in places of memory prompts new relationships between the rhetorical critic and the “object” of criticism – what Blair referred to as the differences made by “being there.” I suggest that the ethnographic

methods we engage while “being there” – participant observation, interviews – allow us to ask different questions about rhetoric and have the potential to change the focus of our inquiries. From the “object” and the assessment of its rhetorical capacity we could move toward the complex relationships between people and “object” and the discernment of rhetoric as it happens in the ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation between people and “object.” Moreover, I argue that the places/settings we choose for our explorations as rhetorical scholars should be further subjected to scrutiny by asking where is “there” and how do we chose it? In the specific context of public memory studies, we could challenge the habit of focusing almost exclusively on official and intentional remembering practices by directing our gaze toward remembering as it is integrated in and arises from everyday life. I further illustrate these points by providing examples from my own inquires into how communism is remembered in Romania. More precisely, I contrast my approach as a rhetorical scholar using ethnographic methods for examining the Museum of Communism in Sighet, Romania, with my approach as a qualitative researcher guided by rhetorical questions and concerns while examining remembering practices in everyday life.

The Differences of “Being There”

Like with the larger field of rhetoric, public memory studies have expanded their horizon from textual analysis and memory conceived as a textual/rhetorical practice to include more varied objects. Within this expansion, rhetorical scholars have been increasingly captivated by public places of memory such as museums, memorials, monuments, public shrines, and so on. Once they turned toward spaces and places, rhetorical scholars working in public memory started to reflect on the idea of “being

there.” Blair, for instance, argues that “being there” is not an issue that should be raised exclusively in relation to the study of space and urges critics to ponder the differences between actually experiencing a rhetorical event or object and using reproductions of the event or object such as texts, videos, and images.¹⁸ I would like to complicate the issue of “being there” by two additional questions: What do we do while being there? And: Where is “there”?

Being There to Do What?

One of the differences highlighted in rhetorical scholarship on public memory is that “being there” in these sites of memory enables critics to engage with “rhetoric’s materiality as well as its symbolicity.”¹⁹ Being *in situ* demands a consideration of rhetoric as it is achieved through spatial elements, enactments, and embodiments and allows critics to reveal these places as particular rhetorical accomplishments that do not rely (exclusively) on language. For instance, museums have been variously defined as “spaces of attention,”²⁰ “experiential landscapes,”²¹ and “rhetorical experiences,”²² thus emphasizing the compelling rhetorical force of the material and symbolic arrangements in place. These types of examinations are vital for understanding how authoritative organizations would like their visitors to see and experience the past. But the critic examining rhetoric in the space of the museum produces an account about, as Brummett would put it, “a potentiality of experience”²³ and describes memory as institutions administer it. Can these accounts claim that they portray the visitors’ experiences? Are they able to answer such questions as “How does it [the museum] act on persons?” And: Whose memory do critics explore when they are concerned with the rhetoricity of museums, memorials, and monuments?

The second difference produced by “being there” is that scholars have the opportunity to observe—if not engage—other visitors. For instance, Blair and Michel write, “Because we paid even just a little attention to an audience’s reactions and its peculiar characteristics . . . we believe we were better able to account for the rhetorical failure of a discourse that we believed ought to be a success.”²⁴ As this fragment states and as the lengthy description of visitors’ reactions in their article about the Astronauts Memorial shows, by paying attention to the audience in a memorial site rhetorical scholars are able to attend to the “actuality of the experience,” rather than its potentiality. They are able to more accurately describe what the rhetorically salient features of the site *from the point of view of visitors*, at least as it is reflected in their movement patterns; they are able to inscribe and relate the site in/to a context of practices (such as tourism and consumption) that contribute to the ways in which the place is experienced and interpreted *by real individuals*; and they are able to discern the multiplicity of “reading practices” amongst which the critic’s is but one of the possible interpretations.²⁵ In observing visitors’ reactions and responses to a site of memory, the question raised might change from “How does the museum act on persons?” to “How do persons act on the museum?” and “How do individuals’ social practices and interpretative strategies impact on and negotiate the meaning of the museum?” Thus memory appears not as the modality in which the museum administers the past, but as a process of meaning making in which visitors have significant room for individual action.

In addition to observation, audiences can also be approached through interviews. One of the differences offered by “being there” is that scholars can explore what people say and how people talk about the museum and their experience in it. Bowman, for

instance, while doing research on the Mary Queen of Scots House (MQSH) in Jedburg, Scotland, “asked visitors to elaborate on what they enjoyed about the MQSH and their impressions of the house.”²⁶ The visitors’ responses to his inquiries reach beyond stark evaluations of the museum as such and while they are less useful for assessing the success or failure of the museum’s rhetoric, their insights are of great assistance in revealing some of the factors that contribute to their individual interpretations of the memorial house. Through these interviews Bowman is able to reveal individuals’ rapport to history, the intersection between individual stories and the national past, and the intricate relation between historical truth and memory. More importantly, observing and interviewing the people in the site allowed him to “to focus less on the epistemological issues of what a particular site ‘says’ or ‘knows’” and to explore how visitors are possessed by the site and at the same time they take possession of it.²⁷

Katriel offers yet another version of “being there” that makes a difference.²⁸ In exploring the relation between Israeli heritage museums and their public, she decided to pay attention to the tour guides’ discourses; she also conducted life-stories interviews. Katriel was thus able to gain insight into how museum tour guides become narrators of history whose personal experience and past—what Katriel calls “autobiographical insertions”—contribute to and intertwine with the museum story. In looking at the museum as a rhetorical construction accomplished by the objects on display *and* the tour guides’ narratives, Katriel examined practices of remembering as enacted in “the interplay of material and verbal culture in a contemporary context of face-to-face examples.”²⁹ Subsequently, she used her fieldwork to generate a dialogue with museum practitioners.

These detailed examples reveal that rhetorical scholars' versions of "being there" or of "in situ" research are quite diverse. They reveal that a social space is a rhetorically multidimensional setting and "being there" presents various prospects of examining rhetorical processes. These versions vary not so much in the degree of involvement or contact with the rhetorical object,³⁰ but in the degree to which rhetorical scholars open up to seeing the space as a *rhetorical social setting*. On some level, "being there" for examining a *space as a rhetorical object* is as obligatory as reading a *text as a rhetorical artifact*. What Aden et al. call the position of "scholar-as-visitor,"³¹ is not very different from "scholar-as-reader/interpreter." But engaging the site via ethnographic methods—observation, interviews—produces a shift in vision. First, it opens up the possibility of seeing rhetoric not as an achievement of the site as "object," but as the ongoing interactions between people and object, in a way that potentially blurs the traditional division between object and context. Second, these methods are practiced with the mindset of rhetoricians, but they inflect us as much as we inflect them. For instance, Blair and Michel confess that noticing the people in their chosen setting did not produce a shift "*from* rhetoric" but prompted questions "that a rhetorical study typically would not."³² Third, and most importantly, in paying attention to people and the ways they respond to and make meaning of their rhetorical surroundings, we move closer to the ethnographic stance which assumes that the goal of research is *to learn from the people* participating in the culture. The examples above also vary in the degree scholars adopt ethnographic methods or ethnography as a "way of seeing."³³ Some of the scholars mentioned above do not claim to do ethnographic research and their critical texts indicate that they engaged the site exclusively through their own bodies and consciousness.³⁴ Blair and Michel

mention that being there somewhat accidentally enticed them to observe visitors and, while not claiming a connection to ethnography,³⁵ they practice “taking notes on visitors’ activities and conversation.”³⁶ Bowman and Katriel both use interviews in their inquiries into memory practices, but only Katriel announces her study as “an ethnographic project.”

While revealing some of the choices opened up by “being there,” at the site of memory, these studies also illustrate a particular approach to public memory: they examine museums, memorials, and monuments as sites where memory resides. They define “there” as these obvious and discrete spaces of official memory.

Where Is “There”?

To paraphrase an ethnographer’s reflection, maybe the “where” should be a more important question than the choices about “what we do . . . when we got there.”³⁷ In other words, we might want to reflect on the location of memory and practices of remembering. If “the past is everywhere,” as Lowenthal argued,³⁸ and “everything is a memory case,” as Confino believed,³⁹ where do we look for memory? On one hand, heeding the call of critical rhetoric, some scholars turned toward vernacular memory.⁴⁰ On the other hand, in an effort to move beyond textual expressions of rhetoric, a rather strong current locates memory in official sites such as museums and memorials.⁴¹ More importantly, with notable exceptions,⁴² rhetorical scholars investigate remembering almost exclusively in such deliberate memorializing practices as museums, memorials, monuments, commemorations, and archives, but also books, movies, photographs, and so on. More generally speaking, they examine “self-reflective remembrance” and thus “emphasize memory as the representational labor of signs, deeds, and objects.”⁴³

The exploration of official memory is, of course, an important line of inquiry, because it attends to the ways in which memory is ideologically constructed and reveals how the past is used as a symbolic resource that contributes to the production and reproduction of a given social group. These ideological constructions need our critical scrutiny. We should never stop revealing what Young called “the activity of memory in monuments,” in order to “save our *icons* of remembrance from hardening into *idols* of remembering.”⁴⁴ But by generally privileging official forms of memory, we largely reduce public memory to its authoritative manifestations. Similarly, inquiries into intentional forms of memory – I include here the vernacular and the popular⁴⁵ – offer vital insights into the political, social, cultural, and economic systems that provide normative versions of the past. Collective memory, however, has more varied manifestation, as it involves “numerous different people, practices, materials, and themes.”⁴⁶ To reduce remembering to its official and intentional enactments is to reduce the field of its actual manifestations, as well as the field of our research possibilities.

Writing about the overwhelming focus on intentional forms of memory, Schudson writes,

Non-commemorative collective memory should be not an afterthought but a primary concern in the study of collective memory. Memory studies suffer from the drunk-looking-for-his-car-keys-under-the-lamppost phenomenon: we look for effective public memory at self-conscious sites not because that is where we will find what we are looking for but because that is where the illumination makes looking most convenient. Moreover, formal commemoration often acknowledges not the power of living memory but its fading.⁴⁷

While rhetorical scholars have repeatedly called for attention to everyday rhetorics, and while this call is increasingly followed, the area of public memory studies remains largely fastened to official and intentional remembering practices. That is why I

think that an important addition to a discussion about what it means to be there is the question of “where do we go to examine remembering?”

In this context of theoretical and methodological issues and interrogations, it appears that “being there” or “going there” has opened for rhetorical scholars a Pandora’s box of wonders, questions, and tensions that can be productively explored by reflecting on the possibilities offered by the intersections between rhetorical inquiry and ethnographic approaches. More precisely, I argue that a more systematic engagement with ethnographic methods and more generally qualitative approaches, far from obstructing rhetoric’s humanistic character or impeding critics’ creativity and freedom, can in fact assist us in “being there” with more coherent purposes. To illustrate this point, I use some of my own work on the practices of remembering communism in Romania and I organize my argument in two steps. First, I attend to what it means to investigate memorializing practices by going and being there, where “there” is a place pre-selected in accordance to the received tradition of public memory studies. Second, I explore the possibilities opened up by an ethnographic approach to memory, in which the places for inquiry are not pre-selected, but established during the research process, by listening and talking to the participants in the culture. I conclude by sketching some of the ways in which the role of the rhetorical critic can be transformed within the ethnographic/qualitative framework.

Going to and Being at the Museum

In Romania there are few intentional sites dedicated to the remembering of communism and none of these can be qualified as official. In fact, one has to be “a skilled and determined museum goer” to “discover the few places where aspects of the

communist past are permanently exhibited in Romanian museums.”⁴⁸ The only Romanian museum dedicated to communism is located in Sighet, a remote town on the border with Ukraine. It occupies the building of a former communist prison where in the 50s the freshly installed communist regime incarcerated a significant number of the Romanian pre-war politicians, intellectuals, and religious figures. Scholarship in collective memory continually emphasizes the importance of the museum and more generally of official memorializing practices for the production of a collective memory and for the creation of a national identity.⁴⁹ These official remembering practices constitute a “socializing system whereby fellow citizens gain common history through the vicarious memory of their forbears’ experience.”⁵⁰ The significance of such sites and practices is thus somewhat self-evident for rhetorical studies, which, crudely put, are concerned with investigating the intricacies of public life. For rhetoricians, collective commemorative “discourses, objects, events, and practices” are meaningful, legible, partisan, consequential, and public.⁵¹ In other words, they are rhetorical. Armed with such assumptions, in the summer of 2010 I arrived at the Museum of Communism, Sighet.

The history of the prison in Sighet does not start with the communist regime: there are several layers of memory that structure the site. Sighet is a small border town in the northern part of Romania, in the historical region of Transylvania. For more than two centuries, Transylvania was integrated into the Austrian Empire and, starting with 1868, into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Sighet prison, where the Museum of Communism is located today, was built in 1897 by the Austro-Hungarian authorities with the occasion of the First Magyar Millennium. After 1918, when Transylvania became part of the newly created Romanian state, the prison housed common criminals. In 1944,

the Sighet prison was used as a deportation center for Jews and antifascists who were subsequently sent to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. Among other things, Sighet is the native town of Elie Wiesel, one of the most famous Holocaust survivors. In the small city, a visitor's eyes can simultaneously catch the street signs pointing toward Wiesel's memorial house and the Sighet museum. In 1945, the city of Sighet witnessed the repatriation of former prisoners and deportees from the Soviet Union. Starting with 1948, the communist regime used the prison as a place for its most prominent and feared political opponents. In 1955-1956, following the Geneva Convention and the admission of Romania to the United Nations, the Romanian state was no longer allowed to incarcerate its citizens on political grounds. As a consequence, the prison became once again destined to common criminals, while its former political prisoners were freed, transferred to other places, or put under house arrest. In 1977, the prison was closed, and its structures were turned into a broom factory and a salt warehouse, until eventually they became abandoned ruins. In 1993, the Civic Academy Foundation—a non-governmental organization—took over the ruins of the former prison and started the work of transforming it into a museum. As the construction had been seriously affected by humidity, the restoration labor took about seven years. Initially, this labor was funded from private resources until 1997, when the Romanian government provided support for the final stages of the renovation process. In fact, the Civic Academy Foundation makes a point of narrating the difficult relation they had with official authorities, highlighting the reluctance if not straightforward hostility of some political actors toward the project. The prison site has a convoluted and rich history which is narrated on the museum's website, but at the actual physical location, the Museum of Communism in Sighet advances and

foregrounds its story as a communist political prison. In order to establish and accredit the place as a Museum of Communism, its initiators isolated, selected and accentuated one particular portion from the long and layered past of the site, while muting and discarding other parts of its history. More importantly, the communist past of the site advances “prison” as a metaphor/synecdoche that expands beyond the walls of the actual site for narrating the entirety of the communist past in particular ways. The website of the museum describes the Sighet prison as “one of the most sinister prisons of the totalitarian system,” a place that helped the regime accomplish its goals of “political purification.” These particular facts about the Sighet prison become *motifs* that are further used and amplified throughout the Museum’s exhibits in order to account the communist regime as an evil force that attempted to confine and destroy the Romanian nation.

The visitors start in the Maps Room, where a series of maps provide a chronological and spatial overview of the forty-five years of communism in Romania. On the wall opposite the entrance, on a large white map of Romania, 230 small black crosses indicate all the locations where communists incarcerated people – including places of forced labor and deportation camps. Under the map, the black lettered text reads: “When the court of law cannot serve memory, only memory can serve as a court of law.” These are the words of Ana Blandiana, a Romanian poet, anti-communist dissident, and one of the leaders of Civic Academy Foundation, the organization that established the museum. These words set the tone and frame the purpose of the museum, which, to some extent, is constructed as an “evidence warehouse” amassing together documents, objects, testimonies that prove the criminal nature of the communist regime. The museum/prison has three floors with a total of eighty-seven rooms. The museum rooms are mainly crated

in the former cells and each cell contains an exhibit dedicated to such topics as the “the 1946 elections,” “the destruction of the political parties,” “repression against the church,” “Romania’s sovietization,” “Collectivization and repression,” “destruction of Romanian academy,” “art behind bars,” “the repression of culture,” “persecuted families,” “demolitions in the 80s.” As their titles suggest, these exhibits are primarily built around the themes of destruction and oppression. Some of the cells are named after the individuals—prominent political figures of the pre-war period—who had been incarcerated and died at Sighet, thus emphasizing how communism had literally assassinated the nation’s best citizens.

Two of the cells – one on first floor and one on the second floor - reconstruct the punishment cells. They were called “The Black [Cell]” and they were dark and empty, except for a pair of chain cuffs in the middle of the floor. The description explains that the prisoners who were deemed recalcitrant were isolated in these cells, naked and barefoot, in total obscurity. Chained to the ring in the middle of the cell, they were forced to stay on their feet. “The Black” along with the documents, objects, and the oral testimonies in the museum attempt to construct the authenticity or, more precisely, the historical authority of the site. This authority is particularly augmented by the Research Center that functions within the Museum. Bennett writes, “Museums function largely as repositories of the already known.”⁵² But as the communist regime largely distorted and concealed its own history, the museum created its exhibits while also doing research on the communist past, thus constructing for itself a place of historical and normative authority from which to speak.

While being at the museum, I observed the awe with which the visitors encountered the exhibits; I read the guest book, in which they expressed how moved they were by the suffering induced by the communists and how repulsed they were by the cruelty of the regime; I watched them taking photographs of themselves with the “Cortege of the sacrificed,” a statuary representing a group of “eighteen human figures walking towards a wall that shuts off the horizon, just as communism barred the way to millions of human lives;” and I watched them buying memoirs, history books, and refrigerator magnets from the museum’s store. While being at the museum, I also participated in the museum’s summer school, a week of history classes about communism organized for high school students and history teachers – a context in which the museum was more of a milieu of memory in which history and the tools for studying it was handed down to the young generations. While being at Sighet, I also visited some of the touristic “highlights” in the area. In the tourist guides the region is promoted as a pristine rural region, rich in folklore and traditional artifacts. On some level, the tragic aura of the museum is at odds with the idyllic images of wooden churches and wooden gates, traditional homestead, peasant costumes, pottery, folk festivals, medieval towers and castles, and traditional cuisine that construct the touristic appeal. All these experiences allowed me to subsequently explore the multiplicity of discourses and practices intersecting in the museum –practices and discourses related to history, justice, civil society, politics, education, and tourism. The Museum of Communism in Sighet was a site through which complex rhetorical acts were accomplished and authorized. However, these complex rhetorical acts do not speak of how *people make sense of their past*, but of how a specific organization–albeit culturally representative–makes sense of

the past. And even as we attend to people in the context of the museum, we can only explore the ways in which they negotiate and respond to the meanings advanced by the museum. To a certain extent, focusing on a single vehicle of memory – the museum – results in exploring memory in “symbolic isolation” from the “society as a global entity–social, symbolic, political–where different memories interact.”⁵³

When I returned to Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, the effervescence and the intensity of memory that I felt in and around the museum in Sighet faded away. It was not because there was no effervescence or intensity in the remembering of communism in Bucharest. It was rather because there was a different quality or a different feeling attached to the processes of remembering as they happened in the capital city. Away from/beyond the extraordinariness of the site dedicated to the memory of communism, the practices of remembering were dispersed throughout the everyday; their intensity and effervescence was an effect of their variety as opposed to their concentration in one place. In some sense, the publicness of remembering was constructed through multiple, thin lines of activities, rather than through a dense visibility, like it was the case with the museum. To clarify these rather hazy observations, I returned to Bucharest for an ethnographic study in the summer of 2012. I chose qualitative research not only because its methods would assist me in gaining access to remembering practices as they unravel in everyday life, but also because a qualitative approach orients the inquiry focus toward the actuality of rhetorical experience (rather than toward its potentiality) and facilitates a more global understanding of remembering practices.

Going in and Being with the Culture

Rhetorical scholars have a tense relationship with the idea of method, especially as “method” is largely conflated with the notion of “scientific method,” that is, with objective, positivist science. For instance, when Black explains the methods of rhetorical criticism, he does so by contrasting it to “those disciplines that seek objectivity as an ideal.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Brummett establishes the unique character of rhetorical theory by contrasting it to social science theory. He argues that rhetorical theory does not necessitate the accumulation of too much evidence, it does not require testing, and its role is not to predict or to confirm/disconfirm other theories. Thus, the idea of method as outlined by positivist research has been not only regarded with skepticism, but also repudiated by rhetorical scholars who think, with good reason, that it would impede the creative act of criticism.⁵⁵ In other words, rhetorical critics reject the idea of method when by method “we mean the mechanistic, formulaic, scientific application of an apparatus.”⁵⁶

Ethnographic work and more generally qualitative research can, of course, have positivist tones, but it is never “a process that can be rigidly codified.”⁵⁷ More importantly, methods and their practitioners are circumscribed by their respective paradigms. Specific methods are chosen as the result of a set of “assumptions, interests, and purposes,”⁵⁸ which are “guiding ideals”⁵⁹ underlying a paradigm’s worldview. Additionally, in the exercise of methods, the conceptual awareness provided by the training in a specific discipline plays a key role. When rhetoricians enter the field, “they bring a critical lens informed by their disciplinary training.”⁶⁰ Like rhetoric, qualitative research is distrustful of forms of inquiry that seek “to produce factual accounts of culture

and social life” and champions writing that is “interpretive, political, and personal.”⁶¹ Like rhetoric, qualitative research depends on the person of the researcher/critic. Just as the “the critic is the sole instrument of observation,”⁶² the researcher, in qualitative research is regarded as the human instrument.⁶³ Like in rhetoric, the method requires the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. Just as Brummet argues that method is “the exercise of a trained sensibility,” qualitative researchers contend that theoretical sensitivity is crucial to the practice of method.⁶⁴

Unlike rhetoric, qualitative research is committed to examining and understanding the culture from the point of view of its participants. A qualitative researcher attends to “the meanings people attach to things in their lives”⁶⁵ and places “the issues of respondents at the forefront of inquirer concerns.”⁶⁶ In rhetorical studies, the critic relies on him/her self and the training s/he received in rhetorical theory and criticism to make decisions about which “objects” are rhetorically salient, which features of the “object” should be included as concerns of the analysis, and what is the meaning that *could* be discerned from the rhetorical discourse, object, practice, or event. Instead of taking for granted that the researcher alone already knows how to address these issues and instead of constructing a critical text that represents solely the critic’s perspective on rhetorical “texts,” a qualitative approach heeds the perspectives of the participants in the culture and struggles through the difficulties of “how best to describe and interpret the experiences of other people peoples and culture.”⁶⁷

Such an understanding of research meant, among other things, that I was not the one to decide which were the rhetorical salient practices, events, objects, or discourses; it meant that I would allow the participants in the culture to teach me which places, events,

practices are important for them in the context of remembering communism. Brummett wonders, “Can rhetorical theory account for the way rhetoric is actually experienced?”⁶⁸ In answering this question, Brummett posits, “That would entail actually going to the public and asking them, ascertaining how John and Jane Doe assembled message sets last Friday. Not only is this never done in rhetorical studies, it would take the rhetorical scholar *out of his or her proper area* and into survey research.”⁶⁹ “Actually going to the public and asking them,” however, can offer a valid path of research for rhetorical scholars, without taking them out of their “proper area,” because a rhetorical study is defined by the kind of questions one asks.⁷⁰ One of the important questions that could be answered within a qualitative study in the area of public memory is “what are the places, objects, events, and discourses that facilitate or animate remembering?” By asking this question we bracket some of the assumptions we regularly make as rhetorical scholars about the objects and places of memory that are rhetorically salient and allow the participants in a culture to share with us their own perspective.

In attending to this question, my own exploration of the ways people remember communism in Romania revealed that memory is not animated only in/by intentional places of memory. My interviewees repeatedly and frequently spoke of a variety of everyday places that keep their memory of communism alive. Moreover, the ways in which they remember communism through these places are different from the sobriety and normativity of remembering promoted in the Sighet museum, but these modalities of remembering are not necessarily refuting or resisting this normativity. For instance, the apartment buildings raised during the communist regime are some of the most significant places of memory for the inhabitants of Bucharest. The block of flats built by the

Romanian communist regime between 1947 and 1989 constitute a ubiquitous material presence in the current urban landscape of the city; some of my interviewees related that remembering communism is “unavoidable” in this context. On one hand, the tower blocks symbolize and recall the totalitarian agenda, which attempted to homogenize the lives of individuals by amassing them in seemingly identical homes. As such, the apartments are sinister reminders of an evil regime, especially as their construction required the demolition of numerous private one-family residences. On the other hand, they are the concrete physical places that continue to house the large majority of the Bucharest population; and even as people would like to get away from these forms of habitation, social and economic conditions push them back toward them. As one of my interviewees told me, “when I was in my twenties, I used to hate these ‘match boxes’; but now, in my thirties, when I think about having a family... you know... I am struggling to acquire one of these apartments that I detested for such a long time...” The museum in Sighet attempts to come to terms with the past by judging and condemning the regime for its violence and immorality. While they also recall the regime’s violence, the apartment buildings in Bucharest convey the impossibility of dealing with the past in such definitive terms. And while they are clearly places that facilitate and animate the remembering of communism, the apartment buildings can hardly be treated as traces and vestiges as the past, as they continue to have a key role in the present lives of the inhabitants of Bucharest. In addition, they serve as reminders of communism, i.e., they are places of memory without being marked or considered as such in a traditional way.

In addition to the apartment buildings, almost all of my interviewees mentioned specific restaurants or confectionaries that remind them of communism because of some

physical arrangements such as “the checkered black and white tablecloth” and because of the “waiters’ attitude... you know, condescending.” They described these places as being “frozen in time,” or spaces in which one “steps back in time.” In speaking about these places as “communist” my interviewees certainly mobilized personal experiences and memories. These places remind them of communism because they “feel” familiar, because, in the past, they in-habited⁷¹ these (kinds of) places. Their lived body puts them “in touch with the physical aspects of remembering and the physical features of place.”⁷² However, the memories that these public, everyday places animate are not exclusively private, as the dimensions of communist life that people recognize in these spaces have been, at some point, collectively experienced. None of these locations have a historical significance that would validate them as conventional places of memory, and yet, they are significant for the processes of public remembering. In addition, none of these locations are intent on reminding people of communism; to a certain extent, both the physical features and the waiters’ behavioral aspects invoked by my interviewees can be described as a sort of inertial reminiscence of the past – in itself a significant dimension of the past. Thus, on one hand, they are ordinary spaces of consumption; on the other hand, they are extraordinary sites precisely because they stimulate remembering—and not because they are places specifically dedicated to remembering. In emphasizing communism as lived time, they offer an important complement—if not corrective—to the Sighet museum, where the emphasis is placed exclusively on the historical and political dimensions of communism. Remembering communism through these places calls attention to the mundane, everyday dimensions of history that are often forgotten in the making of a museum and, more generally, in our inquiries on public memory.

By asking the participants in the culture questions that would help me to learn from them about the objects, events, discourses, and practices that are salient for their remembering of communism, I allowed them to dictate the places I would examine. For example, one of the public places that were mentioned by several of my informants was Atelier Mecanic (Mechanical Workshop). Atelier Mecanic (Mechanical Workshop) was described to me as “a communist bar,” by which it was meant that the bar intentionally recreated some dimensions of the communist past. Thus, I turned my analytical gaze to the bar only after and because the participants in the culture indicated the location as significant. I not only conducted participant observation at the bar, but I also conducted interviews with the designer of the bar and some of its frequent visitors. This strategy enabled me to look at how the bar functioned rhetorically from several perspectives: the perspective of its creator, the perspective of the physical/material organization of the objects in the bar, and the perspective of its patrons.

Atelier Mecanic is decorated with pieces collected from former communist factories now left to ruin: the engines, machines, chairs, the industrial workbenches, the melamine tables, the spanners, the wrenches, the rolling contact bearing, and the work safety posters had been dislodged from their “natural” industrial environment. The creator of the bar envisioned the place as a sort of homage to the industrial design as it was developed in Romania; he thought that industrialization is one common denominator of all European countries. In this way, he positions Romania’s industrial past in synchronicity with the European past, thus countering the discourses that narrate Eastern Europe as a region that lags behind,⁷³ and participating in broader Romanian efforts to

construct the country as having already been in Europe—as opposed to thinking of it as one of the more recent members of the European Union.

To a certain extent, because of the authenticity of the objects displayed, the bar is similar to a museum; at the same time, however, the bar is also a place of everyday consumption, but one which establishes special kinds of relationships with its patrons. Contrary to the designer’s intention that the bar be seen as an exemplar of industrial design, Romanians and foreign tourists alike quickly labeled the place as “communist.” In exploring how the bar acquires this signification, talking to people about how they experience the place offered valuable cues for my hermeneutic insights. For instance, one of the patrons of the bar suggested that there are elements of the bar that she recognizes as familiar – much like in the places where familiarity was an unintentional effect. But at the same time, she was also aware of the place’s fiction, which was, among other things, an effect of the objects having been, as she put it, de-naturalized. They used to be everyday objects of the factory workers; now they have become everyday objects consumed, in a capitalist economy, by white-collar workers. The rich material collected through participant observation and interviews, enabled me to do an analysis of the ways in which objects, through the anesthetization practices they have been subjected to, interact with people’s own remembering – both individual and collective. Talking to people about the bar also helped me position the bar in relation to the Romanian hipster, because the bar seems to be one of the places that appeals—through its use of the past—to the hipster identity. When I mentioned the bar to them, several of my informants exclaimed, “Ah! That place where hipsters go!” Following this pointer, I explored the relationship between the hipster community and the bar; with these connections in place,

the communist past became “trendy” and “hip.” More importantly, in doing participation observation and interviews to explore more general questions about practices of remembering in everyday life, I was able to position the bar, the discourse of its designer, and the practices of its patrons in connection to other cultural practices. For instance, the bar is inscribed into a larger cultural practice of using the communist past for cultural production; in collecting the factory objects, the designer contributed to the variety of private and public practices that aim at preserving objects of the communist past; and in frequenting the bar, its patrons participate in a larger public that audiences the communist past. All these practices together sustain the past in the present in ways that evade the clear designations with which we are used in memory studies: private/public, individual/collective, intentional/involuntary. In other words, my qualitative analysis fostered a more holistic understanding of the rhetorical ecology of remembering.

Because qualitative research seeks to identify the ways in which participants make meaning of their worlds, as well as because in this approach, “all perspectives are worthy of study,”⁷⁴ one of the “perks” of this approach was, for me, the identification of alternative and everyday places of memory, which have the potential of advancing new ways of thinking about the relation between remembering, people, and places. A second significant advantage offered by qualitative research is its “holistic emphasis,” which assumes that “any phenomenon and its surrounding context is ‘all of a piece.’”⁷⁵ Thus, in my study, remembering and the everyday life of the people are examined in their intimate connections. Examining the practices of remembering in the context of everyday life, allowed me to develop rich and nuanced analyses that highlight the intricate relationships between people, objects, events, and practices of remembering, as well as relating and

differentiating between a multitude of practices of remembering—including the relationship between private and public practices. In fact, my analysis revealed the ways in which private and public practices are recursive: they feed off each other. For instance, in order to decorate the bar, the designer of Atelier Mecanic salvaged material vestiges of communist from factories. The practice of salvaging, however, is inscribed in a larger set of practices that aim to preserve the communist past; these practices range from simply keeping possession of some object, to salvaging and collecting. These practices are performed both on a private and a public level, but both the private and the public practices make sense or are authorized in the context created by the other level. When a private person decides to keep possession of an object that recalls communism, this act is inscribed in the private/personal sphere, because the object is retained as a reminder of the individual's life. However, the object is also retained as a reminder of the individual's participation in a specific historical era; the object authenticates the individual as a witness of history. At the same time, more public practices such as the salvaging of the factory objects and their display in a public space create a context that stimulate and authorize the more private practices. And vice versa: the individual practices stimulate more public practices. These aspects attend to and interrogate the relationship between private and public and challenge the focus of public memory scholarship on conspicuous objects, events, practices, and discourses.

Going to the Museum of Communism in Sighet was useful for exploring an institutionalized, quasi-official form of memory; but exploring it in isolation from other, more mundane practices offers a partial and rather skewed picture of remembering. The practices of remembering and the resources for memory are more numerous and more

complex than the museum can reveal – even as I explored the ways in which visitors react to and interact with the museum. Bracketing the assumption that museums and more generally intentional forms of memory are the most significant places of memory and allowing my analytical gaze to be guided by the participants in the culture supported a more comprehensive exploration of remembering practices. My concluding section endeavors to offer a more focused discussion of the benefits and tensions implied by working at the intersection between rhetorical studies and qualitative research.

Conclusions

In the above sections I discussed some of the grounds that rhetoric and qualitative research have in common, while at the same time arguing that rhetorical studies have a rather tense relation to the idea of “method.” However, one of my key arguments is that qualitative research has more in common with rhetoric than it has with the scientific method disavowed by rhetoricians. In the course of the previous sections I also attempted to demonstrate the advantages provided by using a qualitative approach, while arguing that qualitative/ethnographic methodologies do not threaten the integrity of a rhetorical study. A rhetorical scholar enters the field with his/her specific disciplinary concerns and questions and with a theoretical sensibility that will guide the study toward rhetorically relevant issues and explorations. In the above illustrations I mainly attended to the ways in which qualitative research can assist the rhetorical scholar in obtaining insights that can refine various theoretical and conceptual understandings. I suggested a novel understanding of public memory places, of the relationship between remembering and the everyday, and of the mutual influence of the public and private practices in

remembering. Significantly, this novel understanding was obtained through continuous contact and immersion in the culture, and through intimate interaction with the data

In what follows, I want to open an important discussion about the ways in which the role of the critic – as traditionally understood in rhetorical studies – is challenged by the goals and assumptions of qualitative research. As I mentioned, ethnographic/qualitative approaches aim at understanding a culture on its own terms. Understanding the point of view of the participants in a culture, however, is somewhat at odds with the role envisioned for the critic in rhetorical studies. In the tradition most famously articulated by Black, the critic should function as an educator. The critic, writes Black, "proceeds in part by translating the object of his criticism into terms of his audience and in part by educating his audience to the terms of the object."⁷⁶ Brummett, who thinks that the critic should "teach people how to experience their rhetorical environments more richly,"⁷⁷ reiterates this position. In practice, this position is translated in the ways the critic feels entitled to decide, based on his/her training – based, ultimately, on the received theory – what are the rhetorically salient discourses, events, practices, and objects of a culture. It also translates in feeling legitimated to offer an informed, qualified, intelligent, and creative understanding of these rhetorical discourses, events, practices, and objects. "Criticism," writes Dow, "is a product of our creativity."⁷⁸ These views establish the critic as the absolute authority in all issues rhetorical. Qualitative research, in turn, asks us "to examine how things look from different vantage points"⁷⁹ and critical rhetoric, for instance, makes efforts to attend to voices and communities that until now have often evaded critical attention.⁸⁰ But qualitative approaches also ask us to consider that the perspective of the researched is "as important

as the researcher's."⁸¹ In practice this can be translated in several ways and while I suggested some of them above, I return to them in more direct terms.

One of the key ways in which I attended to the people's point of view in my research was to abandon the idea of deciding on my own what are the rhetorically salient aspects that relate to the remembering of communism. Instead of deciding what places to visit, what events to attend, or what practices to heed, I listened to the participants in the culture in order to learn from them what they consider important, how they frame the issues, what they do, and where they go. Another way in which I attended to their point of view is by using their cues to further both my fieldwork, and my analytical insight. Contrary to what some may think, by talking to and interviewing people we do not obtain purely "subjective information" or "personal opinion." While subjectivity and biographical characteristics are part of what influences an interviewee's responses, cultural forms, public patterns of discourses,⁸² and orientations toward topics that are determined by a specific social location and a particular context⁸³ are also embedded in an individual's discourse. When individuals talk and make sense of the world, they mobilize "culturally available forms"⁸⁴; moreover, because during interviews "the talk produced is self-monitored" to a great degree, "the interview talk has the features of a public performance."⁸⁵ Thus, by talking to individuals, we access the culture they represent and in which they participate. Consequently, in my research, I assumed that the people I talked to had more expertise than I had in establishing and guiding me toward the rhetorically salient features of their culture. In addition, their voices added depth to my hermeneutical insight, thus also revealing the polysemy of the various "texts" that I encountered. For instance, the "bounded multiplicity of meaning"⁸⁶ identified, for

instance, in the case of Atelier Mecanic resulted from the consideration of the various vantage points considered. This polysemy, however, was not the result of a “resistive reading,” of a “strategic ambiguity,” or of the “hermeneutic depth” recognized by me as critic.⁸⁷ The polysemy was an effect of the various nuances and interpretations, of the various practices of use that gave meaning to the bar and to the objects in it, and of the multiple discursive, physical, economic, and cultural contexts by which the bar was framed. In my analytical account of the bar, as in my analytical account of the apartment building, I was assisted by insight that came from the participants in the culture.

Surrendering to the point of view of the participants, however, does not curtail the critical analysis of the culture. As Taylor and Bogdan put it, while “qualitative researchers must seek to understand all perspectives, they must eventually decide from whose vantage point to write these studies.”⁸⁸ In my work, for instance, I tried to write from the point of view of the everyday people I interviewed, defending, to some extent, their remembering practices against the normative pressures of civil society that require the outright condemnation of the communist regime. However, the everyday life of people contains elements that make impossible such a straightforward position. As I explained, the apartment buildings, for instance, promote a more ambiguous relation to the communist past. Reviled as reminders of a regime who attempted to confine and homogenize the individual, they are also convenient habitation solutions for certain socio-economic categories. I also looked at the ways some practices of remembering are labeled as nostalgia or nostalgic consumerism. In this context I attempted to explain these practices from the perspective of my interviewees, i.e., as ways of responding to and

coping with the radical societal and economic changes brought about the overthrow of communism and as modalities of resisting the hyper-politicization of the past.

I think that one productive way to answer to Blair's question, "How can we be confident that what critics identify as significant features of the rhetoric they study have significant influence?" is by approaching the study of rhetoric with a qualitative orientation. Doing rhetorical work that relies on insight from the participants in the culture we study is one of the ways we can ensure that our work is closer to the communities we attend to and it is only through a thorough understanding of rhetorical processes from *people's point of view* that we can have a meaningful conversation about the ways in which rhetoric actually functions in the world.

Notes

¹ Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography. A Way of Seeing* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2008), 45.

² Ono and Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse; Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices. The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Robert Glenn Howard, "The Vernacular Web of Participatory Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25, no. 5 (2008); Aaron Hess, "Democracy through the Polarized Lens of the Camcorder: Argumentation and Vernacular Spectacle on Youtube in the 2008 Election," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 47, no. 2 (2010).

³ Conley and Dickinson, for instance, speak of a "spatial turn" in the humanities that has also affected rhetorical studies. Donovan Conley and Greg Dickinson, "Textural Democracy," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010).

⁴ See, for instance, Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, Act up, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, no. 1 (1999); Daniel C Brouwer, "Counterpublicity and Corporeality in Hiv/Aids Zines," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 5 (2005); Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

⁵ Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric," 159.

⁶ Pezzullo, "Touring "Cancer Alley," Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice," 350.

⁷ Middleton et al, as well as Hess argue the adoption of ethnographic from this vantage point. Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions; Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric."

⁸ Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56, no. 2 (1989).

⁹ McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture."

¹⁰ Ono and Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse; John M. Sloop and Kent A. Ono, "Out-Law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment," *Philosophy & rhetoric* 30, no. 1 (1997).

¹¹ Phaedra C Pezzullo, "Performing Critical Interruptions: Stories, Rhetorical Invention, and the Environmental Justice Movement," *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 65, no. 1 (2001).

¹² Karma R Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2011).

¹³ Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric."

¹⁴ Mindy Fenske, "Movement and Resistance:(Tattooed) Bodies and Performance," *Communication and critical/cultural studies* 4, no. 1 (2007).

¹⁵ Art Herbig and Aaron Hess, "Convergent Critical Rhetoric at the "Rally to Restore Sanity": Exploring the Intersection of Rhetoric, Ethnography, and Documentary Production," *Communication Studies* 63, no. 3 (2012).

¹⁶ Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric," 169-70.

¹⁷ Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," 396.

¹⁸ Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," 276.

¹⁹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum " 29.

²⁰ Zagacki and Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art."

²¹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum " .

²² Gregory Clark, "Rhetorical Experience and the National Jazz Museum in Harlem," in *Places of Public Memory. The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Carole Blair Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010).

²³ Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," 104.

²⁴ Carole Blaire and Neil Michel, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronauts Memorial," in *At the Intersection. Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Thomas Rosteck (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 68.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁶ Michael S. Bowman, "Tracing Mary Queen of Scots," in *Places of Public Memory. The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Carole Blair Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 202.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 208-10.

²⁸ The idea of "difference that makes a difference" is explored by Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places." See also Blair and Michel, "The Aids Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration."

²⁹ Katriel, "'Our Future Is Where Our Past Is:’ Studying Heritage Museums as Ideological and Performative Arenas," 69. See also "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums."

³⁰ Blair, for instance, asks, "What relationship does or should the critic have to her/his object of study? How proximate is it? How proximate should it be?" Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," 288.

³¹ Aden et al., "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and Its Places," 312.

³² Blaire and Michel, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronauts Memorial," 68.

³³ Harry F Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira, 1999).

³⁴ For instance, Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum "

³⁵ For Blair and Michel, for instance, attention to audience is interpreted as a corrective provided to rhetoric by cultural studies. Blaire and Michel, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronauts Memorial," 68.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁷ Clifford Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 102.

³⁸ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15.

³⁹ Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," 1387.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Pezzullo, "Touring "Cancer Alley," Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice; Collings Eves, "A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women's Cookbooks; Ekaterina Haskins, "Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2007); Aaron Hess, "In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials," *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 5 (2007).

⁴¹ The publication of *Places of public memory. The rhetoric of museums and memorials* speaks to this strong current. Carole Blair Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, ed. *Places of Public Memory. The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010).

⁴² For instance, Collings Eves, "A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women's Cookbooks." McCormick also shows how "ordinary political actors discursively will their own precursors or, put a bit more archly, their own ancestors." McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse."

⁴³ Stormer, "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mnesis," 30.

⁴⁴ Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 14.

⁴⁵ In the sense of popular culture, i.e., widely circulated by well-organized economic systems of marketing and distribution.

⁴⁶ Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," 159.

⁴⁷ Schudson, "Lives, Laws, and Language: Commemorative Versus Non-Commemorative Forms of Effective Public Memory," 3.

⁴⁸ Cristea, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," 275.

⁴⁹ Among others, Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History; Bodnar, *Remaking America. Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

⁵⁰ Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 6.

⁵¹ Blair, "Introduction," 22.

⁵² Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 147.

⁵³ Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," 1391.

⁵⁴ Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism. A Study in Method* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), xiii.

⁵⁵ Condit, "Rhetorical Criticism and Audiences: The Extremes of Mcgee and Leff," 342. Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode."

⁵⁶ Charles E Morris III, "(Self-) Portrait of Prof. Rc: A Retrospective," *ibid.* 74, no. 1 (2010): 12.

⁵⁷ Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 16.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 3.

⁵⁹ Egon G. Guba, *Paradigm Dialog* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990); de la Garza, "The Four Seasons of Ethnography: A Creation-Centered Ontology for Ethnography."

⁶⁰ Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular. A Plea for Ethnographical Rhetoric," 169.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, viii.

⁶² Black, *Rhetorical Criticism. A Study in Method*, xi.

⁶³ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*.

⁶⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*; Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 7.

⁶⁶ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin, "Introduction: Revolutions, Ruptures, and Rifts in Interpretive Inquiry," in *Turning Points in Qualitative Research. Tying Knots in a Handkerchief* ed. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003), 6.

⁶⁷ Lincoln Yvonna S. and Denzin Norman K., "The Fifth Moment," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Denzin Norman K. and Lincoln Yvonna S. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994), 577.

⁶⁸ Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," 101.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 102. The emphasis is mine.

⁷⁰ Sloan et al., "Report of the Committee on the Advancement and Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism," 220.

⁷¹ Casey, *Remembering*, 192.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷³ Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania."

⁷⁴ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 9.

⁷⁵ Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 194.

⁷⁶ Black, *Rhetorical Criticism. A Study in Method*, 34.

⁷⁷ Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," 103.

⁷⁸ Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," 345.

⁷⁹ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 9.

⁸⁰ Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," 387.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 9.

⁸² See McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse."

⁸³ Holstein and Gubrium write, "In an interview, meaning is not formulated anew, but reflects relatively *enduring local conditions*, such as the researcher topics of the interviewer, biographical particulars, *and local ways of orienting to those topics.*"(emphasis mine). James A. and Jaber F. Gubrium Holstein, "Active Interviewing," in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 16.

⁸⁴ Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*, 81.

⁸⁵ Pirjo Nikander, "Interviews as Discourse Data," in *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein & Amir B. Marvasti & Karyn D. McKinney (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2012), 402.

⁸⁶ Leah Ceccarelli, "Polysemy: Multiple Meanings in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 4 (1998): 398.

⁸⁷ These are the three types of polysemy that Ceccarelli identifies. Ibid.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 20.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

To: Sarah De La Garza
STAUF

From: Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 05/11/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 05/11/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1205007802

Study Title: Memory of communism in everyday life: A Romanian case study

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B
INFORMATION LETTER

INFORMATION LETTER – INTERVIEWS*

Memory of communism in everyday life: A Romanian case study

Date _____

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Sarah Amira De la Garza in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to understand your thoughts and experience with the memory of communism.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a 45 min – 1-hour interview. You have the right not to answer any question, to stop the interview, and to request to terminate your participation in this research at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Although there is no (financial) benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation are an increased awareness and appreciation of what the memorial means to you. In addition, there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but no personally identifying information will be used in the reporting of research findings. Every effort will be made to maintain the privacy of your data. Your responses will be anonymous. You will be assigned a pseudonym that bears no resemblance to your real name, and none of your information will be kept with your real name. All electronic notes and interview transcripts, and audio files will be kept in physically secured locations by using password-protected files and locked drawers. Any printed documents related to this study will be shredded at the end of the study and the tapes/ recorded material destroyed.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The audio-recording of the interview will be kept in a password secured folder and destroyed at the end of the study.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Marie-Louise.Paulesc@asu.edu. Although, during my stay in Romania (until August 5), I will also be reachable via mobile phone: 0744 357 5127. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

* This letter is to be presented to the interviewees in Romanian.