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Post-1989 Revisions and Re-imaginings

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This book is dedicated to the memories of our mothers, Ann Douglas Pearce and Maria Sojka.

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Contents

Chapter 1
Mosaics of Change

Susan C. Pearce and Eugenia Sojka

It has been 31 years since the countries of Central and Eastern Europe formally broke from state socialist systems and 29 years since both the Soviet Union dissolved and Yugoslavia began to break apart. Across these decades, political and economic transformations have been gradual and dramatic, actually existing and aspirational, emancipatory and restricting. Unquestionably, accompanying and animating these changes is the story of culture. This book forwards the claim that "culture" is integral to this globally significant, and incomplete, transformational story. Among the cultural discards early in the transformation, to cite examples, were art and media censorship, ideologically prescribed monumentation, architectural styles, street names, bans on religious gatherings, limitations on consumer goods, and controlled scholarly cultures. Although in retrospect, it is clear that such developments traveled at uneven paces, and many even preceded the year 1989, it is also evident that the openings to previously disallowed ideas and expressions unleashed a dizzying array of cultural activity in sudden spurts. The shift allowed novel arenas of artistic creativity, expanded media outlets, gave rise to sanctioned religious and ideological expressions, permitted cultures of activism, redefined political culture, and opened the door for creative works reflecting on the recent past and emerging future. And cultural change also advanced in anti-progressive/anti-humanistic directions. We have brought together scholars in the humanities and social sciences for a collaborative reflection on the dynamics of culture and cultures within the region, post-1989. In these pages, these authors offer detailed research on the meanings for the region and beyond.

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Early in the aftermath of these mostly "velvet revolutions," cultural change could have been predicted. Historians and social scientists have documented the influence of sudden societal disruptions on cultural shifts, including technological innovations, language changes, new decorative arts, rituals, and food production (Vandkilde, 2007, pp. 11–16). Research by sociologist Ann Swidler suggests that it is often during "unsettled times" that individuals come to question cultural codes and traditions and adopt new values (Swidler, 1986).

Further, the 1989/1991 revolutions, in part, targeted culture as one behemoth in need of discarding. The original architects of Marxist-oriented systems knew the criticality of cultural control to institute new political and economic structures, as Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution exemplified. Control involved excising entrenched practices, values, and styles across multiple, interacting spheres: the realms of the arts, ideology, architecture, political symbolism, religious spheres, and collective memory. And even as the Soviet-directed regimes moved to reduce ethnic allegiances, system leaders instrumentalized regional cultures to construct national identities that carried state-socialist ideologies, such as through local village culture houses (Urdea, 2020). By the 1960s, the Soviet Union and satellite states were exporting costumed touring troupes globally, and continued to produce souvenir tchotchkes. "Culture" was also a stage where resistance played out, illustrated by the defection of several Russian ballet stars, as well as novelists and others in the culture industries.

Clearly, regional colors remained legitimate even as an international worker revolution attempted to defy class, gender, and ethnic distinctions. State-socialist homogeneity, it turned out, still maintained a semblance of national flavor as promoted via the professional arts and folklore. However, as Sojka explains in this volume, the many subnational indigenous cultural styles and languages were either suppressed or redefined as national-level folklore cultures. Thus, these systems manifested a mix of cultural novelty and reification of inherited collective identities. Despite the predominance of "structural," material bases that largely animated Marx's writings, sociologists Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith noted that "[c]ommunist and fascist thinkers attempted to alchemize what they saw as the barren codes of bourgeois civil society into new, re-sacralized forms that could accommodate technology and reason within wider, encompassing spheres of meaning" (Alexander & Smith, 2003, p. 15).

The social movements that would eventually produce the region's 1989 revolutions or "refolutions"—a portmanteau of "reform" and "revolution" (Ash, 1990)—themselves were culturally meaning-ful, generating symbols, ideas, discourses, images, and rituals, and simultaneously generated *by* cultural forces such as underground texts, ideas, performances, religious communities, and even traditions (Matynia, 2001). Culture was both motiving force and outcome. Marking both the Cold War and the iconic moment that the region's systems suddenly collapsed, the Berlin Wall exemplifies the power of a structure that was simultaneously a symbol. Its polysemy is summarized by historian Hope Harrison as "representing a living, often painful memory and embodying powerful competing meanings ranging from imprisonment to liberation,…" (Harrison, 2019, p. 14), animating heated debates over what to do with the Wall's remnants and memory.

As borders between the region and the wider world began to melt beginning in 1989, the region's citizens entered the latest cycle in the more expansive cultural changes at transnational levels, featuring globalizing transportation networks, new forms of communications media, and unparalleled cultural mixes as cross-border migration increased. Notably, as newly sovereign nations "returned to self" following 1989, there emerged critical challenges of a distinctly cultural nature: the rise of narrowly ethnic-based nationalisms, civil wars, recoveries of disturbing histories, and loss of state support for museums. A stark reminder of the potential violence that accompanies cultural clashes was the eruption of the 1990s Balkan wars. And since 2014, nationalist sentiments have helped spur a resurgence of Russian political power and regional control, catapulting such subjects as cultural identity, heritage, social memory, and ideology back onto the international stage as global concerns rather than regionally contained developments. Populist ethno-nationalism has also increasingly enjoyed political dominance in the larger region, with Hungary and Poland in particular, though not solely, exemplifying this development.

This book, a result of new empirical scholarship, places the subject of "culture" front and center in its analysis of the post-1989 and post-1991 worlds that were formerly behind the Iron Curtain. A major swath of the research terrain and public discourse since 1989 and 1991 has been devoted to the important macro questions of democratic consolidation, state-building, and economic restructuring (Lawson, Armbruster, & Cox, 2010; Ost, 2005). While a growing number of social-scientific studies are documenting the cultural sides of the system changes, these are fewer in number than those devoted to the "structural" political and economic transformations. This, despite the fact that the 1990s wars in Yugoslavia hastened the "cultural turn" across the social sciences in recognition of the dangerous power of deeply held nationalisms. And this despite the cultural heritage for which this region is known globally—from Dostoevsky to Chopin to Liszt to Kandinsky. To be clear, important academic work is advancing on a full range of cultural "fronts" such as collective memory, national identities, the arts, and other areas (Kosicki & Beinek, 2011; Olick, 2003; Zubrzycki, 2006). Nevertheless, scholarship has far more to explore in the dynamically evolving worlds of culture, and to draw out conversations across these varied cultural arenas.

The book's chapters represent new work by authors across countries and across social science and humanities disciplines. The authors initially assembled in June 2015 for a conference in Kraków, Poland, to present and discuss the progress of "Mosaics of Change" in comparative perspective since 1989, to inform one another, build collaborations, create new knowledge, and raise the profile of the subject of cultural change.[1] Those papers eventually resulted in this edited volume: a cross-disciplinary effort to document and understand recent conditions and developments across several cultural realms.

[1]This 2015 conference, "Mosaics of Change Revisited," was a sequel to the 1999 conference, "Mosaics of Change," by the same organizers, also in Kraków, Poland, resulting in an edited volume of the same name (Pearce & Sojka, 2000).

Relatively Autonomous Cultures in System Changes

This book forwards the argument that cultural change is central to current developments in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, rather than peripheral, or as a reflection of political and economic change. One sub-argument of this claim is that cultural forces must be considered if we are to understand the directions of the political and economic restructuring. The book takes a postcolonial/decolonial direction, as an alternative to social science literature during the early years of the transformations that became labeled "transitology" (Fukuyama, 1992). The latter expressed the modernization paradigm that presumed that Western norms and systems had triumphed with the sequence of events that commenced in 1989 and 1991. In contrast, a growing number of scholars are underscoring the region's indigenous uniqueness and contributions. Polish sociologist Tomasz Zarycki argues that his region's fear of domination by the East obscures the ways in which it has been culturally colonized by the West (Zarycki, 2014). The chapters in this book are in line with Zarycki's critique, in addition to other literature that is growing in popularity such as cosmopolitan theory. For example, this volume both refuses to privilege Western norms as the blanketly accepted new ideal and publicizes the region's own unique cultural products and novelties. New symbols, artistic products, and vocabularies, for example, emerged from Ukraine's 2013–2014 Euromaidan protest movement. Preceding this movement were the region's "Color Revolutions" protesting the continued authoritarianism in the region, each of which adopted its own symbol, including the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. These revolutions resulted in new presidents, though challenges to full democratic governance continued. While honoring the indigeneity of these creative outputs, we recognize the convergences between the region and the realms beyond its borders, including such pursuits as strengthening human-rights cultures and conceptualizing autonomous spheres of civil society.

The goal of this interdisciplinary exchange is to further knowledge about the current state of cultures across the region and about the workings of cultural change more broadly. Just as this book draws out threads of shared experience across the countries represented, it also highlights the divergences. For instance, those who were the front-runners in European Union membership have benefitted from the administrative inclusion and financial investments of membership, creating a new dividing line within the region. Further, some countries such as Hungary are diverging from their initial democratic commitments and returning to state controls on the media and other cultural arenas. Since our 2015 conference, a new political regime in Poland has attempted similar cultural controls. And both countries represent the challenges of resurgent nationalisms, further demonstrating the need for scholarly attention to culture.

What are the dynamics of change across the cultures of this expansive region? As the authors here reveal, the worlds of post-1989 and post-1991 Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia are not sitting still—from border changes to new literary developments. Among the constellation of cultural changes represented in

this volume are revised collective memories of Jews in Poland, new LGBTQ rights cultures, resurgence of Islam in Central Asia, and migration to Russia. This book considers the interconnections across a number of realms of material and ideal culture, including elite culture and outsider art.

Culture Moves, Culture Stalls

This book is organized according to five primary thematic arenas of cultural change: Europe and National Imaginations; Religion and Memory; Consumption, Popular Culture, and Media; Literary Transformations; and Political and Activist Cultures. These arenas reflect a diversity of academic, as well as creative, genres. And cross-cutting those genres are several shared cultural dynamics. These authors have uncovered and analyzed, for instance, (1) symbolic replacement: the pace of changes that render pockets of the region nearly unrecognizable to their pre-1989 selves; (2) symbolic stagnation: the stalling of cultural changes in other pockets; (3) symbolic contestation: the competing cultural forces within and across nations; (4) symbolic convergence: the global context in which cultural diffusion in multiple directions and novelty are at play; and (5) symbolic novelty: the emergence of novel cultural hybridities, including across cultural groups and across societal spheres.

The first crosscutting dynamic, symbolic replacement, is evident in broad sweeps of activist cultures regarding gender and sexuality. Although these have been built slowly, and clearly unevenly, across countries as measured by the size of street protests and events such as Pride Parades, recent years have seen unprecedented swelling of women's and LGBTQ public protests. Across artistic and literary worlds the lifting of ideological censorship has unleashed new innovations. Despite initial post-1989 questions about whether such freedom might jeopardize the unique creativity that *samizdat* literature and other artist productions used to fool the censors or surreptitiously express resistance, the region is awash with novel literary works. In fact, the raw material for these works is seemingly endless, from reflections on the post-1989 developments, to changing identity formations, to memories of the pre-1989 era.

A second dynamic, symbolic contestation, appears in chapters that delineate competing visions of the ideal society, conflicting identity groups, and tensions over cultural constructions of a group or nation. Ukraine, for example, has been reconstructing a sense of self in contrast to less accurate collective memories of Ukraine of external observers.

A third and related dynamic that this volume underscores, symbolic stagnation, is that cultural change toward progressive, democratic, and humanistic aims has met roadblocks. These include an incompleteness to memorialization of Polish Jews in Poland's landscapes and the crisis in museum sustainability in Bosnia. Further, a tense dialectical relationship between the new activist cultures and certain individuals and institutions that oppose these has emerged. Among the examples are the stances that the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian political authorities have

taken to ban LGBTQ marches and protest markings and the resistance by the Polish Catholic Church and political authorities to European Union statutes to advance gender equality.

A fourth dynamic, symbolic convergence, is related to the global context in which cultural diffusion in multiple directions is at play. As the region's denizens dove into changing tides of transnational cultures, they began to appropriate globalized communication; the more financially fortunate could more easily travel, and millions migrated beyond their national borders. Many experienced broadened access to journalism, art, music, literature, ideas, and academic knowledge. By no means are we arguing that the region has not been subject to cultural dominance by the West or by other global trends and developments. Nevertheless, the many examples of agency of cultural actors across the full "region" clearly indicate that those external cultures are absorbed, hybridized, critiqued, or sampled across venues from activism to fiction-writing. Further, the region's cultural products and ideas are simultaneously diffusing outward into the larger global arena.

And a fifth dynamic, that of symbolic novelty, partly related to this multi-directional diffusion, is the emergence of novel cultural hybridities. What several of these authors reveal is how the openings were not a unidirectional absorption of "Western" habits, lifestyles, and ideas, but offered raw materials for new combinations of cultural elements. Importantly, the authors in this volume contextualize border crossings *not* as new experiences for these countries, but as the latest forms of a long, extended historical pattern. Ironically, that historical pattern created syncretic cultural expressions and identities (literatures, languages, religions, foods) that some quarters now defend as monocultural "returns to self."

Across those countries that are represented, the research in these chapters reveals that "cultural change" is far from monolithic, despite sharing the experience of undertaking transformations, even though at different paces. Trouble spots such as territorial disputes between Ukraine and Russia that continue to claim lives coexist with global tourism to bejeweled cities like Prague. Further, as these authors are keenly aware, many external observers also still view the region as an "Other," as a place continuing to need the advances of the West, and thus monolithic in this shared need. Where, for example, do Western Europeans view the southern and eastern borders of their shared continent? And although this book is not a work of research on the issue of economic inequalities that plague the populations both within each country represented here and across the east-west divide, such concerns are far from absent in these texts. Unquestionably, Europe's growing waves of populism have roots in financial disenfranchisements, including neoliberal policies of austerity that were exacerbated with the Great Recession of 2008. Populism, it turns out, is not confined to those European countries across the east.

There are important pockets of cultural elements and themes that are less visible in this volume. As an example, among the critical sinews of cultural change in this region and beyond are those of new communications media—particularly, social media. Although there is no chapter devoted to this area specifically, the subject does appear in this volume—from the role of the media in instigating protest actions to access to the literary, ideological, and cuisine cultures across borders, to the galvanization of

nationalist sentiments, to the transferability of knowledge, to the creation of cross-border artistic collectives, one can find evidence of this instrument of cultural change spread widely across these chapters. And as this book goes to print, it is precisely the region at the center of this book that is implicated in counterproductive uses of social media, including alleged Russian interference in elections in the United States and elsewhere, via such techniques as creating fake news alerts using social media outlets.

This book represents a variety of regions across the former Eastern Bloc, although admittedly with heavier representation of Central Europe—particularly Poland. This was due to the location of the conference that generated this book primarily, which also reveals the continued financial disparities that prevent conference attendance by many academics throughout the region. Nevertheless, despite this constraint, the reader will find texts on nations within the Baltics, the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, as well as Russia and Ukraine. This volume does not claim to cover every corner of the full region or of the many realms of culture. Nor could an encyclopedic set of volumes. We were fortunate to be able to gather rich cross-disciplinary works that provide insights and key details that to help illuminate the multifaceted subject of cultural change. Although this book's purpose is predominantly descriptive and analytical rather than prescriptive and ideological, the reader will notice critical perspectives on the changes. Several of these writers uncover power dynamics that underlie many of the region's significant challenges.

A Preview

Here, we briefly preview the book's chapters. With the exceptions of author and co-editor Susan Pearce and author Anne Saville, all represent academic voices within the region, who bring deep connections to the realities that their writings describe.

In Chapter 2, Valeria Korablyova sets the stage for the book by critically asking whether the changes wrought from the "revolutions" can accurately be characterized by the first tomes of analysis that emerged on the meanings of these directions, including Fukuyama's proclamation that the victory of democratic and capitalist systems over communism reflected the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992). Using the example of Ukraine as it redefines its independence, most recently through the Euromaidan movement, Korablyova draws on the topological terms "Borderland," "Bloodland," and "Neverland" as metaphors that characterize the country's historical and current positions. She suggests that observers' characterization of the country as a borderland places limitations on it, that its history as a "bloodland" from the Soviet era until the present also positions it as somehow externally controlled, and "neverland," inspired by the Peter Pan novels, characterizes the utopian sentiments of the Euromaidan movement. Korablyova emphasizes the tensions between these various cultural constructions of Ukraine in its global position, and its need for this new reconstruction of self that tears it from the limitations of its history.

Forwarding the conversation over borderlands in these restructuring corners of Europe is Janine Holc's examination of a grassroots initiative in a region of Poland to create dialogue and collaboration across ethnicities in defiance of nationalisms. Like a number of borderlands across the larger Central and Eastern European region, history has left the northeastern Polish town of Sejny with a pluralistic mix of languages, ethnicities, and religious faiths that have long lived in close proximity to one another. The Ośrodek Pogranicze initiative is a current effort, spearheaded by artists, to encourage fruitful and mutually educational cultural exchanges, involving activities such as concerts to create an "entering" of the "Other's" experience. The chapter also reviews the historical context of the region's ethnic groupings as steeped in the agendas of political rulers as much as in cultural markers intrinsic to those group lives. Holc's case study reviews Ośrodek Pogranicze's approach to embracing ethnicity rather than minimizing ethnic differences, and asks critical questions about the risks of underplaying histories of ethnic conflict despite such efforts.

The subject of artistic incursions into cultural identities continues in Chapter 4, where Monika Łuszpak-Skiba analyzes innovative artistic practices of the "*Slavs and Tatars*" collective, recognized worldwide for its alternative expression of geopolitical, social, and cultural changes in Europe and Central Asia, and specifically in the area located between the former Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China. *Slavs and Tatars* are interested in the formation of identities in the region that they examine using a variety of artistic strategies challenging the boundaries of literature, art writing, critical analysis, history, journalism, and visual arts. This collective focuses on Eurasia in order to redeem its Eurocentric culture, and to retell its lost narratives and cultural memory. The artists explore the region's multiculturalism, its history, its languages, its religions, and the influence of the two grand geopolitical forces: communism and Islam. Łuszpak-Skiba describes the collective's work as transregional, transnational, and transdisciplinary, aiming to foreground the often-forgotten relatedness of Slavs, Caucasians, and Central Asians, and to explore their attitudes to the past, the history of communism and Soviet domination, and the history of Chinese Empire and the People's Republic of China. This analysis offers a lens into a contrasting narrative of the "return to self" that describes a rebirth of mononationalism across this region as countries regained sovereignty. In Łuszpak-Skiba's account, this reclaiming of cultural identities and heritages pushes forward a counter-narrative to Western domination, yet framed as a progressive rather than regressive, defensive move. Instead of monologue, national retreat, and bombast, these artworks are about dialogue, cross-cultural connections, and reflection.

Furthering the examination of national self-understandings is Sławomir Kapralski's sociological analysis in Chapter 5. Kapralski critically examines the politics of memory that surround the post-1989 identity-constructions in Poland—specifically, those that touch on the volatile history of the country's Jewish-Gentile relations, and most centrally, the Holocaust era. Through his ethnographic observations of a contested memorial site to Polish Jews, he offers insights into the emotional landscapes that surround the contestations, which he contextualizes by describing the broader political, economic, and cultural changes of the region. For those Poles who benefitted the least from the transformations, memory work is often an ersatz task

of identity recovery and identity competition—especially competition over victim status in Poland's turbulent past. This chapter offers a window into the resurgence of nationalisms and ethno-religious identities in the region writ large, and into the complexities of cultural agency under the conditions of freer civil-society discourse.

Chapter 6 offers further investigation into religious revival and its intersection with politics and power, in the context of a resurgence of ethno-religious identity, focusing on Islam in Kazakhstan. In line with other authors in this volume, Bilal Malik weaves the present-day story into the country's history, where religious and other cultural influences from cross-border migrations have a long history. Due to the official atheism that defined the country during the Soviet era, Malik describes today's rediscovery of Islam as the recovery of a broken tradition, elevating the appeal of the religious faith. In addition to the building of more than 2500 *masjids* (mosques) since 1992, Islamic practices and rituals have infused civil society and home life, with growing government protection, while the state remains a secular institution. This chapter helps explain the rebirth of Islam in Kazakhstan—across a variety of expressions and beliefs—as a quest for community identity intertwined with explanations that are more common, such as the authoritarianism of the government and relative deprivation of youth.

In Chapter 7, Anna Malinowska explores the problem of cultural transfer/mobility of global popular culture, especially its American version, with a special focus on the processes of westernization in Eastern Europe. Interested in the ideoscapes of foreign texts and those inherent in the host culture, she focuses on the intransferability and "ill-adaptability" of specific cultural phenomena and texts to new cultural environments in the post-1990s Poland. She shows how the conservative traditions and ideologies, frequently grounded in Church discourses, impact social attitudes toward gay rights in this country (see also Chapter 14), and examines the problems of transplanting gender ideology and Western gender policies to Polish society, and their rejection and negation by the majority of Poles. Her argument is strengthened by reference to her research on the inadaptability of American erotica novels to the Polish market, not only due to the underdevelopment of sexual awareness of Poles but also because of inadequate Polish linguistic solutions for the freedom of sexual expression in original texts. In her conclusion, she reflects on the positive impact of intransferability on cultural development and cultural change.

In Chapter 8, Urszula Jarecka also discusses the impact of globalization on post-communist cultures by offering an analysis focused on food consumption and production in Central and Eastern Europe, and specifically in Poland, where globalization processes led to changes in eating practices and culinary habits, and to the creation of a new culture of tastes. The changes, which she analyzes using cookbooks, culinary magazines, Internet sites, food festival brochures, official opinion polls, and Jarecka's own culinary photography, are contextualized with reference to tradition and global influences on Polish consumer culture. Jarecka concentrates on three aspects of the phenomenon: globalization as a new dimension of the Polish market, EUropeanization of food production, and the Americanization of lifestyle, which she discusses with reference to the production and consumption practices of bread, meat, and water. She also reflects on food discourse as an ideological battleground for different social

groups. Her analysis reveals an interesting hybridity of consumer and food production culture in Poland expressed in the fusion of old and new consumer habits and lifestyles, and in the cooperation of local Polish and foreign food companies.

Further exploration of the melting borders that globalization brings is evident in Chapter 9, where Ekaterina Klimenko dives deeply into the news media discourses in Russia to uncover the themes that predominate in public discussions of migrants and migration into Russia. Using content and discourse analysis, Klimenko's research finds that migrants are frequently "othered," are spoken about rather than given a voice, and are blamed for their own fates based on assumptions that they are not integrating into society. This research underscores the cultural changes that cross-border migration both introduces and illuminates: As the ethnic and linguistic cultures of present-day Russia diversify, discourses about these groups as having "essential" characteristics shore up a group self-identification as "Russian" that then justifies ownership of land, goods, and services. Missing in these discourses are structural underpinnings of the disadvantages that confront new migrants as they attempt to integrate.

In Chapter 10, Sandra Meškova reflects on the political, social, and cultural changes in the late Soviet and post-Soviet period in Latvia as examined in the genre of life writing, considered an important instrument for the representation and (re)construction of individual and collective identities, and of national statehoods and cultural traditions. She stresses the importance of the genre for Eastern and Central European writers in the post-socialist era, aiming to expose and deconstruct the ideology-based misrepresentations of the past in the Soviet period, especially those concerning World War II and its consequences in the region. To show the revisionary potential of life writing, and its importance in the (re)construction of collective and individual identities, Meškova offers an insightful analysis of documentary fiction and memoirs by Anita Liepa, one of the key figures in Latvian life writing, recognized as a founder of the post-Soviet autobiographical and memoir tradition. Exploring the compositional complexities of Liepa's narratives, she shows how the writer constructs her life story in a close relation to Latvian history, and points to her various ways of rewriting the traumatic history of this country.

In Chapter 11, using insights from decolonial, postdependence, and neoregional perspectives, Eugenia Sojka's study focuses on Upper Silesia, a unique historical region in Poland: a multi-cultural, mixed-language borderland, with the largest minority that is unrecognized by the Polish state, and which has survived and remained culturally active in spite of many years of communist policies aiming to create a homogenous Polish national identity and culture. The analysis reveals a remarkable development of the post-1989 Upper Silesian minority discourses and the role of Upper Silesian scholars, writers, and cultural institutions in the cultural revival of Upper Silesia, in the complex processes of revision and re-imagining of Silesian identity, and in their struggle for official recognition and distinctiveness of the region's culture and language. By examining this distinctiveness as inscribed in a plethora of literary and scholarly texts, the study adds a strong voice to the body of the relatively new discipline of Silesian literary and cultural studies in Poland, as well as to the field of international minority literature studies worldwide. The resurgence

of Upper Silesian literature reveals that many Upper Silesian writers and scholars not only resist nationalist ethno-linguistic constructions of identity, but also embrace the intercultural dimension of their European heritage. They propose a radically inclusive conception of Silesian identity which reconciles regional specificity and cultural hybridity, and not only does it validate the hybridity of Silesian culture, but goes even further, to create a culture of hospitality and responsibility for the Other.

In Chapter 12, Małgorzata Pałach-Rydzy examines the literary scene in Post-Soviet Russia as exemplified by the prose of Kazakh-Russian-Korean writer Anatoly Kim. She analyzes Kim's literary output as an example of broad processes of change in the region's fictional literature after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. This is a comparative study of two distinctive periods of Kim's literary career—the Soviet and post-Soviet periods—which shows the impact on his poetics of both the domestic political, social, and cultural situation of the time of his writing, as well as of the world's larger literary and cultural movements such as modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism. Pałach-Rydzy examines Kim's post-Soviet prose as inscribing a plurality of perspectives: hybridity, multiple experimental techniques, and his supranational thinking as revealed in his analysis of intersections of European and Asian cultures and mythologies, thus enriching Russian literature with distinctive themes and ideas.

Susan C. Pearce and Anne Saville comparatively analyze the presentations of "woman" across the region's constitutions in Chapter 13, as insights into the reconstructions of the meaning of "woman" across political cultures. They examine the move from the image of womanhood that Soviet-era propaganda embraced, presenting women as subjects that would co-build the new nonhierarchical order along with men, to more complex redefinitions of women and their subject positions today. This analysis considers the constitutions to be reflections of the state of the nations' legal cultures, feminist activist cultures, and—often in tension—ethnonational cultures. The authors highlight the similarities and differences across constitutions, with examples that might defy expectations of external observers.

In Chapter 14, Rafał Majka and Tomasz Sikora critically examine the queer politics in neoliberal Poland. They contend that despite a growing visible and activist LGBTQ community in Poland, many LGBTQ individuals are not contesting the "normalization" of neoliberal politics and the resulting economic inequalities that these politics put in place. In contrast, the authors argue that challenges to heteronormativity should be accompanied by critical challenges to other "normativities" such as capitalistic democracy with its assumed subject as the private (rights-bearing) individual. This entails questioning the fuller framework in society. The authors locate a possibility of challenging that framework as emanating from a queer politics.

Chapter 15 is a photo essay by Azra Akšamija. As an artist and architectural historian, Akšamija critically raises questions about the right to culture and the tensions between art and the global cultural institutions that presumably are tasked with keeping, preserving, and publicly presenting the art. Her essay presents her art-activism approach to bring attention to underfunded and closing institutions through two projects: *Culture Shutdown* and *Future Heritage Collection*. Spotlighting the

potential loss of heritage that is at stake, the photo essay offers a window into the uniqueness that Eastern Europe offers in addressing these questions.

Why a book devoted to a region no longer walled off from the world, and thus less culturally monolithic, the skeptic might ask? That same question might be asked by someone within and outside of the region. Representing the former are many who insist on the term "Central European" or simply "European" instead of "Eastern European" to describe themselves—weary of being "othered" and cognizant of the still-melting European divide. Representing the latter would include scholars or lay observers who *do* continue to other the region (often through an Orientalizing "gaze" [Said, 1978]), as well as those who see little point in continuing those historic geographic markers. Our response to the skeptics is that the region's particularity as well as its commonality with its proximate and distant neighbors are rationales for more study. Further, this book's emphasis on both particularity and commonality is intended to help decolonize the region in the imaginations of its outsiders, as it simultaneously unveils insights into cultural change during transformations that might translate to other geographic locations. Chapter 16 wraps up the volume, reflecting on the threads that weave the chapters together, with particular attention to these critical perspectives.

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Part I
Europe and National Imaginations

Chapter 2
Contemporary Ukraine: Borderland—Bloodland—Neverland?

Valeria Korablyova

The events that erupted across Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 drastically changed the geopolitical architectonic of the world, removing the black-and-white image of two opposing "camps," symbolically (and physically) divided by the Berlin Wall. These profound, near overnight "collapses" overthrew established theoretical approaches on the world order, consequently making way for others. First, the events gave rise to a number of "*end of something*" and "*post-X*" claims, thus strengthening both liberal supporters and postmodernist theorists. One of the most influential and debated theses, Francis Fukuyama's "end of history," trumpeted the "end of ideology" (Fukuyama, 1989, 1992) and celebrated the newly born, supposedly homogeneous world following the victory of "Western liberal democracy," proposing that the world "… may be witnessing … the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4). Thirty years earlier, Daniel Bell had similarly claimed that ideas had exhausted their mobilizing potential, and that people ceased to dream of better futures, enjoying an infinite prosperous present instead (Bell, 1962, pp. 370–372), and implying that there are no viable alternatives to the political *and* economic liberalism.

Yet, the general post-1989 scenario was not this simple, and a more complex reality supplanted the illusion of simplicity. Geopolitical opposition emerged, which transcended Europe, thus replacing one single Iron Curtain with multiple "clashes of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996). Europe's eastern border (marking European Union member states) moved further to the east, having expanded from a single line to a significant "buffer zone," and eventually labeled "Borderlands." The inertia of substantive descriptors for the region, most often called "post-Soviet" or "post-Communist," is telling in itself: the Soviet Union remains the key reference point; such regional descriptors offer no new specific features except overcoming the Soviet past and the Soviet legacy, which is still deemed to characterize the region.

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Thus, complementing the post-1991 cultural shifts in reclaiming national and ethnic identities is a parallel cultural shift: emerging language to describe and explain the new order. That language and the ideas behind it carry a certain power to suggest a vision of alternative future for the region and for Europe at large. This future is imagined neither as the continuation of an "end-of-history" present nor as a recycling of the nationalist past (as with the recent rise of populism). The hard question here is, however: What could be the center of gravity for this new future? What social, political, and cultural practices might it entail? The 2013–2014 Maidan protests operated like a mirror in which the Ukrainian society tried to see and recognize its problems and prospects. But maybe the "Ukraine crisis" is also a mirror in which Europe might see its current vulnerabilities as well as a germ of an imaginable future.

This chapter aims to reinterpret contemporary Ukraine in terms of its geopolitical place and prospects, using a topological approach: i.e., illuminating (or prescribing) the social and political implications of spatial phenomena. I bring two existing notions into play here, both of which represent the "*land*" (not "state" or "nation"). The first is the well-established notion of "*Borderlands*" (see also Holc, this volume), which emphasizes Ukraine's interim geopolitical position between two civilizations, and two sets of values and worldviews, which supposedly determine its peripheral status and hybrid orientations. The second is the term "*Bloodlands*," coined by historian Timothy Snyder to describe part of Eastern Europe as the location of the most killing sites for both Nazi and Soviet regimes in 1933–1945: "The bloodlands were *no political territory*, real or imagined; they are simply where Europe's most murderous regimes did their most murderous work"[1] (Snyder, 2010, p. 36). Both notions imply a denial of political autonomy, agency, and subjectivity to these lands, communicating a sense of victimhood.

This research I present here is an attempt to comprehend Ukraine's 2013–2014 Maidan (or Euromaidan) movement and its aftermath and to build a theoretical framework to interpret this recent—and ongoing—story. By taking a topological approach, I suggest a theoretical alternative to the rhetoric of "identities" and "post-Soviet," which restricts discussions to Soviet policies and legacies and binds those discussions to "Russia versus the rest of the world." Moreover, the phrase "Ukraine crisis" is often an empty signifier, filled with arbitrary senses. It can serve as a starting point to discuss the hegemony of the United States or global capital, as well as the viability of the European Union project or the opportunity for Russia to "rise up from its knees."[2] Notwithstanding the urgency of these narratives, they generally miss the crucial point: the internal events in Ukraine itself and the significant shifts that have occurred there.

This chapter begins with a reconsideration of the aforementioned characterizations of Ukraine since 1991, which entails going beyond common understandings

[1] From here forward, italics are mine.

[2] This expression is widely disseminated in the public discourse in contemporary Russia. It appeals to the resentment concerning the supposed humiliation after the lost Cold War and implies a revanchist comeback of a newly strong-again Russia. Moreover, this trope travelled across the Russian border (also popular in Poland these days); structurally, it is similar to the "make America great again" claim.

by attaching new senses to established terms. Such wordplay is inspired by the work of Tetiana Zhurzhenko (2014b), who argued that with the recent developments, Eastern Ukraine had turned from "borderlands" (which implied a peaceful coexistence of people with hybrid identities and multiple loyalties) into "Bloodlands" (where otherness converted into a military conflict). I suggest applying those notions to Ukraine as a whole, while considering them as markers for different visions for the country's future. Toward that end, I will supplement this dichotomy with a third concept presenting an alternative path that arguably emerged within the Maidan movement. Applying the device of consonance, I chose the word "*Neverland*" from the Peter Pan story, in order to underscore the heterotopian nature of Maidan, which attempted to build a parallel—better—society while simultaneously keeping some utopian aspirations for Ukraine as a whole.

The resulting threefold topological framework opens practical as well as theoretical alternatives for Ukraine: confronting a boundary as within or nearby (with its negative and positive connotations); descending into aggressive, bloody chaos; or making a breakthrough and emerging as a prosperous country, grounded in European values and principles.

Ukraine as a Borderland, or How Comfortable Is It to Live on a Bridge?

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, observers have routinely treated Ukraine as a Borderland, disseminating a theoretical framework that stresses the country's interim position as one of "mixed and overlapping identities and multiple loyalties" (Zhurzhenko, 2014b). Such a perception characterizes present-day Ukraine as one where "borders are on the move," or global geopolitical space is being remapped. This notion obscures a number of sensitive issues. To name a few, these are: the challenge of drawing clear-cut borders with Russia, sitting between the edge of Europe and the "Russian world," and Ukraine's geopolitical status and identity, through the lens of Immanuel Wallerstein's dichotomy of countries positioned at the "center" or on the "periphery" of the center (Wallerstein, 2004).

What does it mean for Ukraine to be (perceived as) a Borderland? First, it conjures the notion of the modern nation-state and, using Michael Billig's term, of "boundary-consciousness" (1995). As Mann notes, in medieval Europe, there were few clear-cut territorial boundaries, but rather crosscutting networks. People who lived in a territory were usually subordinated to the local lord, and a king had to engage his supposed lieges through the entire chain of hierarchy and subordination (Billig, 1995; Mann, 1988). The French anthropologist Louis Dumont contrasts modern European culture with the rest of the world by identifying it as "homo aequalis," the only culture that has been consistently egalitarian (Dumont, 1976). According to Dumont, modernization demolished traditional hierarchy and decreased the symbolic distance between governor and the people. This fits perfectly the shift from multiple

concentric areas with overlapping peripheries, inherent in medieval Europe, to the bordered system of nation-states in modernity.

This new arrangement sacrifices multiple local centers in favor of bounded communities with supposedly homogeneous living spaces. Billig states that "[n]ationhood, spreading from Europe to the Americas and elsewhere, was established as the universal form of sovereignty. The world's entire land surface, with the exception of Antarctica, is 'now divided between nations and states'" (Billig, 1995, p. 22). The issue of delineating borders varies in urgency depending on location, landscape, and population density. However, the tragic experiences of the twentieth century illustrated that any boundary should be recognized; otherwise, it would cost lives. This became an axiom in international relations following the Potsdam Conference in 1945. Yet, the events of 1989–1991 challenged this principle, and it surfaced once again after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Russian-backed warfare in Donbas.

As Kristof notices, in the pre-modern state, the "frontier was quite literary 'the front': the front of the imperium mundi which expands to the only limits it can acknowledge, namely, the limits of the world" (Kristof, 1959, p. 270). And the term boundary "indicates certain established limits (the bounds) of a given political unit, and all that which is within the boundary is bound together, … fastened by an internal bound" (Kristof, 1959, p. 270). Yet, what would be the parallel in the contemporary world? Unlike pre-modern eras, the seizure of territory does not carry much privilege, because the symbolic landscape and an entity's geopolitical influence are now the important symbols of power-holding. Today, in an era called "late modernity," in contrast to "classic" modernity, globalization (economic and otherwise) has eviscerated and perforated boundaries. In this context, how should nation-building advance, and how should theorists characterize it?

Late modernity seems to have returned to the premodern arrangement of areas and flows, with clear hierarchies replaced by networks. Linguistically, in fact, the term "countries" has succumbed to the word "areas," with the latter emitting a civilizational flavor. As Karl Schlögel puts it, "[t]he new map is more reminiscent of early modernity, of the trade and pilgrimage routes, of the links between holy cities and routes of world communication" (Schlögel, 2008, n.p.). This re-gained "zone consciousness" (to rephrase Michael Billig) marks an important geopolitical shift, from aggressive territorial expansion to financial and symbolic influence. And here again, the map delineates "regions," "zones of influence," and overlapping areas that might be inscribed into a larger zone, or the so-called "civilization." This plurality of civilization, unknown to the medieval world, gave rise to Huntington's idea of marking culturally homogeneous zones instead of nation-states, with a special emphasis on the fractures, or the so-called "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996). Yet, Huntington's theory conveys a certain equality between civilizations, whereas many European theorists still dichotomize "the West versus the rest." For example, Vakhtang Kebuladze, a contemporary Ukrainian philosopher, portrays Russia as an "anti-civilization," or, evoking Jungian language, a "*civilizational shadow*," aimed at destroying Western civilization without suggesting a replacement (Kebuladze, 2016). In a similar vein, Viatcheslav Morozov, a Tartu-based political theorist of Russian

descent, labels Russia as a "subaltern empire" that attempts to combat the West while staying Eurocentric both in its tools and in its aspirations (Morozov, 2015).

This depiction resembles that of Timothy Snyder (2015), who stresses that contemporary Russia does not provide any alternative project of development; it is not a different vision of modernity or "futurity" (Eshel, 2013) but an ideology of destruction. The theorist Lev Gudkov once labeled this peculiarity of Russian culture "negative identity," as always based on denial and a fight against certain "enemies" (Gudkov, 2004). It is noteworthy that in a recent publication, Snyder (2015) implies that the end of Europe can be overcome at its edge—Ukraine—and here the boundary turns into a frontier, a periphery becomes a front by acquiring the status of the greatest importance ever.

Throughout its history, Ukraine has been perceived as a land *on the crossroads*—not only between "Europe" and "Asia" as symbolic entities, but on the trade route "from the Varangians (Vikings) to the Greeks" that connected the "North" (Scandinavia) and the "South" (the Byzantine Empire). This particular geographical location not only enhanced cultural and genetic diffusion within the region but promoted the land's function as a buffer zone between sedentary populations and aggressive vagrant tribes. Therefore, its role as an *outpost on the edge of some area* has a long history.[3]

What is important today, however, is that by marking Ukraine as a borderland, one *excludes it from successful integration projects*—having failed to be a part of some collective entity, it just borders it instead. A borderland connotes a chaotic space over the fence, delineating the area of a particular social and political order. Here, the concept of a "border of prosperity" (Zhurzhenko, 2014a, p. 27) is key, as it is not subject to changing political declarations. This enhances the idea that *integrity precedes integration*[4]: The symbolic act of unification implies a required degree of homogeneity, at least economically, in "EU-speak."

Ukraine as a Bloodland: Stalin, Hitler, and Donbas

I now turn to the concept of "Bloodland." Timothy Snyder explains "Bloodland" as a geographically and historically specific place: "I define the bloodlands as territories subject to *both* German and Soviet police power and associated mass killing policies

[3]Quite telling is the fact that Serhii Plokhy titled his recent book on Ukraine *The Gates of Europe* (Plokhy, 2017).

[4]The interplay of economy and politics within the European integration project is the key here. Whereas candidate states tend to perceive EU accession as a magic tool for drastic economic improvement, statistical data show quite a different picture. Maps that visualize the level of average salary or GDP per capita in different member states disclose the East–West cleavage in a salient way: Even if the political borders were demolished, the economic gap is still there. Interestingly, it produces resentments on both sides of the "border of prosperity" (the fatigue of being a donor vs. the fatigue of lagging behind). Therefore, an alternative approach is that the EU accession is not a magic tool: a candidate state must prosper *not due to* the accession but *before* it in order to get into the club.