Florida State University Libraries

Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations The Graduate School

2012

Contested Sites: 21st Century Romanian Playwrights' Hauntings

Jane G. Duncan

Follow this and additional works at the FSU Digital Library. For more information, please contact lib-ir@fsu.edu

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF THEATRE

CONTESTED SITES: 21ST CENTURY ROMANIAN PLAYWRIGHTS' HAUNTINGS

By

JANE G. DUNCAN

A Dissertation submitted to the
School of Theatre
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2012

Jane G. Duncan defended this dissertation on March 26, 2012.

The members of the supervisory committee were:

Mary Karen Dahl

Professor Directing Dissertation

Edward Wynot

University Representative

Kris Salata

Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

For Mark, Bennett, and Nora. *Te iubesc mai mult decât orice.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with any major milestone, there are a number of people involved along the way. I have been blessed with some wonderful mentors in my life—some peers, some teachers. If not for Dr. Kenneth Campbell, Dr. James Parker, and Janet Rodgers at Virginia Commonwealth University, I would not known about the phenomenal theatre in Romania. I benefitted greatly under your tutelage.

I extend my sincerest thanks and admiration for my classmates and fellow collaborators at Florida State University, especially Susan Russell, Shannon Walsh, Jay Gipson-King, George McConnell, and Geoff Kershner. You made me laugh, inspired me, and kept me on my toes, but most of all you reminded me why I love theatre.

The Theatre Studies faculty at Florida State challenged me, applauded me, engaged with me in meaningful discourse, and taught me how to find my scholarly voice. I am so grateful for your patience and your counsel Dr. Carrie Sandahl, Dr. Laura Edmondson, Dr. Anita Gonzalez, Dr. Alan Sikes, and Dr. Michal Kobialka.

Dr. Stuart Baker was and continues to be a mentor. Thank you, Stuart, for modeling the kind of teacher, theatre practitioner, and human being I aspire to be.

I extend special thanks to my committee, especially Dr. Mary Karen Dahl. Your attention to detail and ability to help me focus my argument has helped make this manuscript what it is.

I thank Alina Coman: enthusiastic supporter, occasional translator, and connector of resources. *Eşti teribil.*

Thank you to the playwrights represented in this work, especially Saviana Stanescu, whose *Waxing West* started it all for me, and who continues to answer my questions. *Sunt recunoscător.*

In memory of Dr. Daniel Gerould, a true ambassador for Eastern and Central European theatre. Thank you for opening the door.

Finally and most importantly, I thank my family—my parents, siblings, and especially my husband and children. Thank you for your sacrifices of time and money, and thank you for your encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		v
1.	CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
2.	CHAPTER TWO: DECONSTRUCTING/RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY	30
3.	CHAPTER THREE: GENERATION GAPS	47
4.	CHAPTER FOUR: DUELING INFLUENCES	80
5.	CHAPTER FIVE: INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY	121
6.	CHAPTER SIX: CODA	146
7.	REFERENCES	150
Biographical Sketch		159

ABSTRACT

Using Carlson's theory that text can be considered "haunted" in the ways it recycles material already familiar to the audience, I suggest that Romanian playwrights writing after the year 2000 are highlighting the historical struggles/difficult past of the nation in an effort to "move on," perhaps specifically in conjunction with Romania's bid to enter the EU. I propose that Romanian playwrights are creating hauntings through their work, and in so doing, are entering into a poly-vocal dialogue about the nation. I offer myself as a bridge in the conversation, not to provide the reader with all of the answers about Romania, but to help complicate Americans' understanding of this nation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> "History is entirely shaped by the system within which it is developed" (Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*).

In 2004, Romania was on the cusp of inclusion in the European Union. They were celebrating the 15-year anniversary of both the end of the Ceausescu regime and the end of communism. [1] Like many of their neighboring countries, they had experienced a sort of identity crisis following the fall of communism, which had been their form of government for over forty years. One of the reforms the EU required of the Romanian government before they could enter the EU was an agreement that prejudice against minority groups would cease. Entry into the EU, and indeed a perception among all Western nations that Romania is "one of them," was particularly important to the Romanian government and the Romanian people. In order to abide by the requirements laid out for them by the EU, Romanians had to figure out how to grant minority groups the same rights they held. To do this, they had to figure out what made Romanians "us" and the minority groups "them," as well as what makes Romania different from the West.

I found myself in this contested space during June 2004; I was in Sibiu, Romania for the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. One evening I debated with a young Romanian woman about the importance of her language. She insisted that in order to be successful in our global community, English is the only necessary language. This woman was not only disparaging knowledge of her native language, but was essentially proposing that English be adopted as a sort of "world language." I admit I was prepared for her privileging of English, as I had already witnessed the ways the Americans and the British were welcomed and celebrated in Sibiu, but I was somewhat surprised by her lack of consideration for the importance of her own language. This exchange stayed with me, prompting me to look more closely at the ways Romanians depict themselves to the outside world. Knowing that there are those who use language as a way to identify members of a particular nation, I began to think about the ways Romanians were

[1] Ceausescu was the self-appointed President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in Romania from 1969 until his execution in 1989. His death marked the beginning of the Revolution in Romania and the fall of communism.

identifying themselves to visitors and also among themselves. This highly contested site is attempting to redefine itself for entry into the EU and the larger global community. When weighing the implications of entering into the global community, it is not terribly farfetched to propose that Romanians may be rearranging their own history.

Marvin Carlson, in *The Haunted Stage* (2001), writes

> The close relationships between theatre and memory have been recognized in many cultures and in many different fashions. The founding myths and legends of cultures around the world have been registered in their cultures by theatrical repetition, and, as modern nationalism arose to challenge the older religious faiths, national myths, legends, and historical stories again utilized the medium of theatre to present—or rather, to represent, reinscribe, and reinforce—this new cultural construction. (3)

Using Carlson's theory that text can be considered "haunted" in the ways it recycles material already familiar to the audience, and in fact can be used to reinvent a history, I suggest that Romanian playwrights writing after 2000 are highlighting the historical struggles/difficult past of the nation in an effort to "move on," perhaps specifically in conjunction with Romania's bid to enter the EU.[2] I propose that Romanian playwrights are creating hauntings through their work, and in so doing, are entering into a poly-vocal dialogue about the nation. I offer myself as a bridge in the conversation, not to provide the reader with all of the answers about Romania, but to help complicate Americans' understanding of this nation.

Prior to my visit to Sibiu, I was in contact with Romanian born playwright Saviana Stanescu, and was able to read one of her plays, *Waxing West*. I was struck by many things in Stanescu's writing, but was particularly interested in the ways she was constructing the idea of the Romanian nation. Stanescu taps into one of the most recognized myths of Romania—vampires. She paints her real-life characters Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu as vampires in this complex play about a young Romanian woman who moves to New York City just before September 11, 2001 to embark on an arranged marriage with an American man. This use of folklore, a tale that feeds directly into misconceptions Westerners may have about Romania (among others, that it is a country of vampires) was surprising and confusing. The play was written in English, ostensibly for an American audience. Several questions arose during my

[2] Romania gained entry into the EU in 2007.

reading: Was her attempt an effort at defining her nation using historical circumstances? Did she utilize the commonly held myths of vampirism and Dracula as a means to complicate our (Western) understanding of her nation? Was it tongue-in-cheek, or was she attempting to reveal some truth in this misconception? How do her depictions of Romania/Romanians affect/reflect Romania's place in the international community? Is her perspective unique in Romanian playwriting, or are there other playwrights who are also attempting to position/re-position Romania for themselves and a more global audience?

With so many questions after reading only one example of a post-2000 Romanian play, I felt that there was a great deal still to be investigated. Stanescu is perhaps the most prolific of contemporary Romanian playwrights, with an ever-growing repertoire that presently stands at seven full-length and five short plays.[3] When queried, however, she quickly rattles off the names of several of her contemporaries, many of whom still reside in Romania. As my curiosity grew about Romanian playwriting and how the playwrights were defining their nation, I began to read some of the plays by the people Stanescu suggested, hoping to get a better idea about how playwrights comment on national identity. What is included? What is left out? Do those who were young adults during the Revolution have a different approach than those who are much younger? How might an examination of the many approaches Romanian playwrights take help to inform and complicate an American understanding of Romanian theatre and the Romanian nation?

Post-2000 Romanian Plays

I have already introduced Stanescu's *Waxing West*, a play that investigates Western stereotypes and misconceptions about Romania/Romanians, while simultaneously complicating the "American Dream" from the perspective of a Romanian coming to America and Americans living in New York. Stanescu's other plays and writings commonly dissect and complicate the themes of stereotype and perception, both from a Western perspective and an Eastern European perspective. As a woman born in Bucharest, Romania, who considers herself "reborn" in New York City during the summer of 2001, Stanescu is central to my investigation.[4] *Waxing West* would probably best be classified as a tragicomedy, as it combines both comic and dramatic elements. Set in both Romania and New York, the main character Daniela is haunted by the

[3] Play count as of September 13, 2009.
[4] This phrase comes from Stanescu's biography, which is posted on her website www.saviana.com.

ghosts of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, who appear as vampires. The play unfolds as a memory, with Daniela introducing us to "her story" as it was and as it is now; scenes in Romania are from Daniela's past and those in New York are her present. The Ceaușescu/vampire scenes are Daniela's nightmares.

Gianina Carbunariu's *Stop the Tempo* (2003) follows three disillusioned young Romanians as they struggle with how to identify themselves as individuals and as Romanians. Carbunariu uses themes that are at the forefront with young people in Romania: despair, helplessness, conflicting emotions about their consumerist society, and rebellion. *Stop the Tempo* is narrated by the three characters, who switch off between direct address to the audience and interaction with each other. Their lines frequently overlap, which contributes to the overall pace Carbunariu has established. In keeping with its title, the play has a very specific, often frenetic tempo. Most of the scenes take place in various clubs, making music an essential part of the play. Carbunariu, along with playwright Vera Ion (*Vitamins,* 2005*),* also looks at the ways individual lives are affected by the socio-political changes that come as a result of the post-communist society. Ion's play centers around a highly dysfunctional family, obsessed with media and money, in which the parents and the children are unable to come to any sort of understanding. The parents don't know how to cope with their new world, and the children blame the parents for all of their problems. Ion's play acknowledges Romania's new Age of Anxiety. The characters struggle constantly to achieve by the newly established "Western" standards and are unable to escape the long shadow of the communist period.

Stefan Peca utilizes similar themes in his musical *Romania 21* (2004), which satirizes Romanians' day-to-day navigations of post-communist society. Peca relies heavily on irony to underscore his central idea: that Romanians need to come to terms with the changing times and not be so quick to look elsewhere for a sense of who they are. The play travels from the early 1980s, the height of Ceauşescu's reign, to 2004, as integration into the EU was imminent.

Cristian Panaite's two short plays, *Bus* (2006) and *Family Ties, Or Bye Bye New York* (2006), both examine different generations of Romanians who are trying desperately to leave their country for what they believe to be a better life. In *Bus,* a group of strangers wait in line to cross the border to "the West" and panic as they realize they will be judged suspiciously because of the items they are carrying. At the conclusion, after agreeing to hide their contraband in the blankets of a sleeping baby, we infer that Panaite is criticizing the older generation of Romanians

with saddling the younger generation with their memories and superstitions—things that inhibit the younger generation from moving forward. With *Family Ties, Or Bye Bye New York,* a man in his twenties and a man in his late seventies wait in an embassy waiting room to get permission to leave Romania for the United States. A middle-aged man joins them and we learn they are the father, son, and grandson in the same family. The men proceed to argue with each other as one by one they attempt to get their visas approved. Panaite again uses the generation gap to highlight Romania's problems—a lack of understanding of different perspectives and experiences, blame, and a general sense of longing for something else.

Finally, Bogdan Georgescu's *Romania. Kiss Me!* (2006) uses a chorus to provide sound effects. The play, set on a train out of Romania, incorporates dark humor and satire to convey a sense of disillusionment as we follow three generations of Romanians on a train out of their homeland.

I acknowledge that the playwrights on whom I have chosen to focus do not represent the various ethnicities present in Romania. For example, I have not selected plays by an ethnically Hungarian Romanian, or a Roma. The reason for this omission is simple—there is very little work by non-ethnically Romanians available in English.

Romanian Playwriting in Recent History

Romanian playwrights have historically held a tenuous position in Romanian theatre. Under communism, and especially during the rule of Nicolae Ceauşescu, Romanian theatre was strictly regulated. In both the essay on Romanian theatre by Alice Georgescu in the anthology *The World of Theatre, 2000 edition,* and the Foreword by Daniel Gerould in the anthology *roMania after 2000: Five New Romanian Plays* (2007), the authors agree that under communism, there was a system in place that purported to support theatre. Playwrights were called upon to validate the state and "propagate its myths both at home and for export. To make the stage a showplace for communist ideology, the totalitarian rulers wooed theatre artists and tried to attract the best talent" (Gerould vii). Theatres were required to include plays by Romanians in their repertoires; these plays were subject to close scrutiny and censorship as the government attempted to control what information was available to the people. This became an extremely fragile position for playwrights: they were pampered and subsidized to be "instruments of official ideology, while in fact they spent their energies and ingenuity covertly trying to sabotage what they were hired to do" (Gerould viii). Leading these arguably double

lives was difficult for many theatre artists, but particularly playwrights. Those who could left the country and were branded traitors, and those who stayed faced constant pressure to conform. Writing became more difficult and many simply gave up attempting to navigate the process.

When communism crumbled in Romania, rather than rejoice at the prospect of finally being able to write uninhibited, Romanian playwrights became essentially mute. "Like starving prisoners suddenly set free, they were too hungry to be able to eat. There is the paradox" (Gerould vii). Romanians were free to talk about formerly taboo issues without fear of retribution. Among playwrights, there seems to have been a questioning of purpose. While playwrights spent the next decade or so trying to regain their footing, Romanian directors stepped into the spotlight. Directors who had left Romania during Ceausescu's regime returned in an attempt to reclaim and redefine the Romanian theatre. Andrei Şerban, perhaps the most famous of Romanian directors, became Artistic Director of the National Theatre in Bucharest in 1990. His goal was to "reveal the truth of our present human experience;" after only three years, he left Romania again, disillusioned (Gerould xi). The 1990s proved to be a decade during which Romanian theatre became a factory for "classic" plays and playwrights. In particular, directors chose Shakespeare, Moliere, Chekhov and the Greeks; they looked to re-envision these classic plays, staging them with new interpretations. The goal of these productions was that they could be viewed and understood by any audiences, and could be taken out of the country on tour. Romanian theatre was looking to the West for inspiration and integration.

After a period of about a decade, a new generation of playwrights emerged. This group was free to investigate whatever themes and subjects they wanted, without concern for fallout. As new and different themes began to be explored, playwrights were also trying to find a new way of communicating with the audience. The style of playwriting they developed is more direct in its approach—playwrights use conversations and events taken right out of everyday life in Romania. Because the political climate in Romania is very different than it was for the previous generation of playwrights, these new playwrights do not appear to have the same need to argue with the regime. There is, however, evidence that bringing up the past and criticizing it is fodder for plays, as is challenging life as Romanians now know it (Gerould xii). Playwrights are re-visiting (or recycling, as Carlson would say) stories, myths, and themes from Romania's fractured and contested past while attempting to reframe their present. I am particularly

interested in how reframing these recycled stories may complicate an American understanding of Romania.

Review of Existing Literature

At present, there is a good amount of scholarship about nationalism and theatre. There is also a tremendous amount of information focusing specifically on nationalism or national identity without reference to theatre, and as much available focusing specifically on cultural identity independent of theatre.

Nation/alism Nation/al identity

Historians, social scientists, and political scientists generally offer the scholarship that focuses on nation, nationalism, and/or national identity through a lens other than theatre. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* provides a solid springboard to the topic, but the book, originally published in 1983 and revised in 1991, may be considered somewhat dated now. However, this does not diminish what is contained in the text: a concise thesis proposing the formation of a nation as an imagined community that uses cultural artifacts like journalism, architecture, literature, painting, and drama to unify the desire for sovereignty (7). Most other scholars who write about nationalism cite Anderson, even if to disagree with him. Berch Berberoglu's work, *The National Question: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Self-Determination in the 20th century* (1995) suggests that nationalism, which he agrees with Anderson emerged in the 18th century, is resurfacing as an area of study as "part of the struggles for national liberation and self-determination in countries and regions of the Third World dominated by colonialism and imperialism"(1). In the introduction to his anthology *Nation and Narration* (1990), Homi Bhabha echoes Anderson's perspective when he asserts, "Nations…lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (1). Like Anderson, Bhabha argues for the study of cultural components to help discern where a nation's identity lies. David Huddart, in his summary of Bhabha's writings on nationalism in his book *Homi K. Bhabha*, wraps up Bhabha's argument regarding how nations are defined by claiming

> The identity of a nation is something narrated, but the process is two-fold: there is a pedagogical dimension that foregrounds total sociological facts, and there is a

> performative dimension reminding us that those total facts are always open, and in fact are being subtly altered every day. We are told what the nation is (and who is part of it), but at the same time the national subjects are inventing the nation at every moment, changing its ideas of itself as well as its institutions. (121)

Ernest Renan's essay, "What is a nation?," included in Bhabha's aforementioned anthology, presents Renan's argument for the importance of "forgetting" in nation formation. He claims " . . . the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (11). This perspective seems related to Bhabha's examination of nation as "Janus-faced"; again in his introduction, Bhabha declares the purpose of the anthology is to "explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation" (3). Essentially Bhabha proposes (and Renan seems to agree) that nation formation draws from many possibilities (forward and backward, remembering and forgetting, etc.) and should not be considered a singular process. "A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history" (18). Renan continues, saying

> The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present: to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people. (19)

Paul Connerton, author of *How Societies Remember* (1989), also explores the issues surrounding a nation's need to remember and/or forget the past. Connerton asserts "present factors tend to influence—some might want to say distort—our recollections of the past. . . past factors tend to influence, or distort our experience of the future" (2). While Connerton uses "influence" as his terminology, I would add that our experiences in "the now" may also *re-shape* our understanding of the past.

The Writing of History (1988) and *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1998), both by Michel de Certeau, are critical texts for the shaping of this dissertation. In *The Writing of History,* de Certeau focuses on several key issues. Essentially he asserts that events do happen, but those events come to us as past imaginings describing the event, and then later as present imaginings

presenting the event. The problem arises in the discrepancy between the two imaginings that create history. How did they become worthy of recording? How were they recorded? Who recorded them? From *The Practice of Everyday Life*, the chapter that is perhaps the most important in this study is "Chapter XIII: Believing and Making People Believe." de Certeau makes his argument that a belief is not a doctrine, but the "act of saying it and considering it as true" (178). For example, Romanians may have a tacit understanding that they have historically looked West for affirmation, but this understanding can only become a belief once they give voice to it and trust that what they are saying is the truth. Additionally, Romanians can only begin to believe that they have a place in the global discussion once they have articulated their worth and can attest to its accuracy.

Anthropologist Katherine Verdery, who has spent a good deal of time in the Transylvania region of Romania, has written extensively about national identity in that area. Her article "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?" (1993) attempts to differentiate between these two commonly confused terms. She blames the confusion on politics, and cautions against both overlapping the meanings of the words and using nation and nationalism to mean the same thing (38). Verdery approaches the terms from an anthropological standpoint, citing nation as a "basic operator in a widespread system of social classification [. . .] in the modern period, nation has become a potent symbol and basis of classification within an international system of nation-states" (37-38). Verdery proposes three pitfalls to avoid when writing about nation: keep the context of the situation in mind, "treat nation as a symbol and any given nationalism as having multiple meanings", and avoid being "conned" into believing that nation is actually defined by "culture, or descent, or history" (39). Looking at the nation of Romania as a country of individuals who are limited by social structures, essentially taking the "ism" out of nationalism, opens up my analysis.

There are sources that examine nation formation through the lens of theatre and theatre through the lens of nation formation. Loren Kruger's *The National Stage* (1993), focuses England, the United States and France from the 1870s to the 1980s. While Kruger's geographical and historical times are very different from mine, her notion of staging the nation and Carlson's idea of "hauntings" intersect and overlap, helping frame my research. Kruger says,

> [t]he notion of staging the nation, *of representing as well as reflecting the people in the theatre, of constituting or even standing in for an absent or imperfect*

> *national identity,* emerges in the European Enlightenment and takes concrete shape with the Revolutionary fêtes. (italics added, 3)

Another contributor to the fields of nation and theatre is Jen Harvie, whose recent *Staging the UK* (2005) argues in favor of Anderson's imagined communities as applicable to theatre. Harvie finds Anderson relevant in the way he proposes that "people's sense of community is produced through cultural practices that are creative and artistic" and that the phrase imagined communities "conveys the impression that the practice of imagining is largely or entirely volitional" (16). Her views are echoed by Zoltan Imrie, whose article "Staging the Nation: Changing Concepts of a National Theatre in Europe" (2008) asserts that national identity is a contested site because, as they are constructed, identities can be changed and (re)formed. Imrie writes, "The past has to be (re)constructed consciously and (of course) unconsciously through the selective process of remembering and forgetting in a retrospective way" (78). These notions of memory, myth, reconstruction and reformation all tie into Carlson's ideas of hauntings and my proposal that playwrights are using their texts to reconstruct and recreate the history and national identity of Romania.

Theoretical Frame

Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage*: *The Theatre as Memory Machine* can be considered a bridge between theories of nationalism/national identity and theatre. Carlson highlights the issues of memory/forgetting/remembering as they specifically relate to theatre/performance. In Chapter Two, titled "The Haunted Text," Carlson reminds us that Derrida argued every text is haunted by other texts and is best understood as "weavings together of preexisting textual material" (17). He goes on

> Drama, more than any other literary form, seems to be associated in all cultures with the retelling again and again of stories that bear a particular religious, social, or political significance for their public. There clearly seems to be something in the nature of dramatic presentation that makes it a particularly attractive repository for the storage and mechanism for the continued recirculation of cultural memory. (8)

While Carlson is speaking generally about play-texts as recycled material, I will use his argument to frame my reading of specific Romanian plays as "haunted" in that they re-tell stories and experiences held in common by the Romanian people during the Revolution and Transition

periods. As I investigate the ways current playwrights re-work and re-imagine the nation as it relates to Romania's inclusion in the EU, I will examine the ways in which the use of this "haunted" material may be helpful in shaping our understanding of Romania as a nation.

Contested (Theatre) Histories

The history of the theatre movement in Romania is not well documented in English, and what is documented is often contradictory and inconclusive. There are some primary documents (correspondence and the like) that have been translated from Romanian into English, and a few other texts written either by Romanians (and translated) or English-speaking scholars who spent time in Romania. What is agreed upon is that Romania has a long and rich history of theatrical performances, with evidence of theatrical events dating back to the sixth century BCE. These early performances are thought to have been part of a developing folk theatre that still thrives in Romania today. Despite this promising beginning, the development of a national theatre in Romania was hindered due to a perpetual lack of political stability, ambiguity of borders, and a general lack of cohesion among the various people. The country now known as Romania was identified as its own nation in 1857, when the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia united. Prior to this union, each of these separate principalities had its own subsidized theatres. These theatres existed in Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia, and Jassy (Iaşi), the capital of Moldavia. According to the essay "Rumania" by Bogdan Mischiu (1991), from the book *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe 1746-1900,* around the time these two principalities united to form Romania, the national theatre movement in Romania was born. Mischiu credits the previously existing theatres with assistance in the beginnings of this movement (301).

According to Mischiu, the first recorded Romanian language production was in 1815. The performance was produced by a German company in Braşov (part of Transylvania) headed by Johann Gerger who was from the area. At this time, Transylvania was a region of what would become Romania that was populated by Hungarians, Germans and Daco-Romanians. The performance has been recorded as being the "first documented performance in Rumanian;" Mischiu debates the veracity of this claim by citing another example he identifies as the "first Rumanian production" (302). The performance cited by Mischiu, given in 1819, was staged by a group of students at St. Sava College at the Cismeaua Rosie theatre in Bucharest. The students

performed Euripides' *Hecuba,* in a Romanian translation by A. Nanescu. The performance began with a prologue, part of a dramatic text called *Saturn* by Ion Vacarescu. This text became the mantra of Romanian promoters and practitioners. The most famous stanzas read as follows:

> I gave you the theatre, guard it closely,
> As a shrine for the muse
> You'll be famous shortly
> With far reaching news.
> The vices it will defy
> And the mind it will sharpen,
> Your mother tongue 'twill beautify
> With words Rumanian. (Mischiu 302)

The verses end with a declaration that can be read as a statement that plays written in other languages will sound better when translated into Romanian and performed. This is somewhat confusing, as at this time there is no "Romania," yet there appears to be an identified Romanian language.

Ruth Lamb, author of *The World of Romanian Theatre*, complicates the date of the first Romanian theatrical production. According to Lamb, who spent a year in Romania on a Fulbright fellowship in 1973, resident dramatic companies existed in both Bucharest and Jassy as early as 1787. The theatres in Bucharest performed in French, Italian, and German, while the theatres in Jassy performed in Russian and Italian. Lamb continues her synopsis of theatre in 18th century Romania by launching into a discussion of the Hetairists (a pro-Greek Society of Friends). This organization was founded in Bucharest in 1780, and according to Lamb was highly influential to the development of a more formal theatre movement in what would become Romania. The group started its own school, where the students performed in plays from French and Greek playwrights in the original language. The plays "were usually nationalistic and anti-despotic,"[5] and despite their best efforts, the Hetairists were shut down in 1821, presumably by the government, although Lamb does not specifically say. Despite this suppression, Lamb asserts that their schools "introduced acting and stagecraft to Romania" (17).

---

[5] The Hetairists were primarily interested in saving Balkan nations from Turkish control. In Bucharest, Greek Costache Aristia directed plays by French and Greek playwrights, while in Jassy the group was run by several Greek and French émigrés.

After asserting the existence of resident companies in Bucharest and Jassy as early as the late 18th century, Lamb goes on to contradict Mischiu's claim that the 1815 Transylvanian production was the first performance in the Romanian language. According to Lamb, the first Romanian language performance was in 1782, over thirty years earlier than Mischiu's claim. Lamb agrees that Transylvania was the site of the first Romanian language production, but she claims that the "first theatrical performance in Romanian was given in Transylvania in 1782, *Achille in Sciro*, with Metastasio's libretto translated by Iordache Slatineau" (17). How interesting that Lamb would consider an opera the first theatrical performance! Perhaps that is why there is such a disparity between her date and Mischiu's. Her next declaration that a Romanian theatre opened in Oraviţa (Transylvania) in 1815 does deal with "legitimate" theatre and does echo Mischiu's claim that Romanian theatre has its roots in Transylvania. But the theatres and plays they use as examples for this "first performance" are not the same.

Lamb says that in 1816,

> Gheorghe Asachi recruited an amateur company at Jassy, and about 1836 he founded a Philharmonic-Dramatic Society, where singing, acting, and declamation were taught. It was at Jassy also that the first National Theatre opened in 1840, under the direction of Constantin Negruzzi, Mihail Kogalniceanu, and Vasile Alecsandri. (17)

This reference to the National Theatre in Jassy echoes Mischiu's claim that there was already a National Theatre in place when Romania emerged from the fusion of Wallachia and Moldavia. Lamb maintains that Alecsandri, one of the founders of the Jassy National Theatre, produced *Jassy in Carnival*, a comedy of manners, in 1845. In Mischiu's essay, there is no mention of this particular production, but he does include another of Alecsandri's writings—an 1844 satirization of Romanian theatre

> **Kiulafoglu**: Where are you going?
>
> **Iorgu**: I'm going to reserve a box for tonight at the National Theatre.
>
> **Kiulafoglu**: Ha, ha, ha . . . At the Moldavian Theatre! . . . Don't you feel bad about the money you'll be throwing away to see some boys who don't even know how to speak . . . and to listen to some worthless plays?
>
> **Iorgu**: If everyone thought as you do, sir, then the national theatre would never be established in this country; but, praise the Lord, there are people who know

how to appreciate the vicissitudes of an emerging theatre such as ours; who are not ashamed to go to national plays and who, finally, showing forgiveness for the actors' mistakes, encourage them and provide them with the necessary support . . . Those people are worth of all praise and the national theatre will always be grateful to them.

Kiulafoglu: All I know is that I haven't the courage to go and yawn for four hours for the sake of patriotism.

Iorgu: As for you, sir, the national theatre will leave you in peace to do as you please; on one condition though, that you too leave it in peace to pursue its career as best it can and do not criticize it blindly. (313-314)

By including this satire, Mischiu complicates the notion of the national theatre. If in fact the satire echoes public opinion, it seems no small wonder that the rise of the national theatre movement is so convoluted. Additionally, the comments made by Kiulafoglu indicate that he (and by implication other citizens) is not at all loyal to the burgeoning Romanian language or nation and would rather see plays in a foreign language. In contrast, it seems clear that Alecsandri favors the opinion of Iorgu and is encouraging his fellow citizens to accept the theatre and what it is trying to accomplish and not stand in the way of its aims (generating national spirit).

To further confuse this narrative I am tracing, Mischiu includes several other pieces of documentation that vary from Lamb's timeline of the development of theatre in Romania. Mischiu asserts that, in 1845, Costache Caragiale founded a resident troupe with Romanian plays in its repertoire. He then includes an entry from 1846 that praises original drama from that year

> The influence of the national theatre is also making itself felt in our literature; *Mr. Iorgu from Sadagura, A Good Education,* and *A Sly Servant* are three entirely original plays that we saw on the Rumanian stage in our capital. If we are to judge by the progress dramatic art has made in our country and the improvement shown by these plays, we tend to believe that dramatic art will someday become the most significant part of our literature. [6] (307)

[6] These comedies are attributed to Vascile Alecsandri, whom Lamb credits with the aforementioned *Jassy in Carnival*. Because the essay discussing the plays of Alecsandri was written in 1846 and does not mention when the author saw the plays, we have no way of knowing when these plays were written or originally performed.

What is again interesting about this essay is that Alecsandri's plays are mentioned as having been performed in the capital city of Bucharest, when Lamb says that his plays were only performed in Jassy. If Alecsandri's plays were performed in both Jassy and Bucharest, capitals of Wallachia and Moldavia, it is possible to view Alecsandri as a conduit in the process of unification.

Simion Alterescu's report clearly delineates stages in Romania's theatre history. He breaks down theatre in the first half of the 19th century by area: Bucharest, Jassy, and Blaj (Transylvania). Because Alterescu's book was written and published during the time of Ceauşescu, I am reluctant to rely heavily on his information. However, I will introduce his perspective to highlight any differences that may characterize pre- and post-revolutionary stories of the Romanian nation. When discussing Bucharest, Alterescu echoes Mischiu's earlier claim that the St. Sava students' production of *Hecuba* was the first produced in the Romanian language. Alterescu includes information that neither Lamb nor Mischiu mention. While Mischiu reported original Romanian dramas in 1846, the plays that Alterescu mentions are different and also took place earlier. Alterescu claims that around 1835 there was a period of original Romanian language plays, including *The Comedy of the Age, or the Ladies Mimicking French Speech* by Costache Facca, and *Matilda* by Cezar Bolliac. While Mischiu says that Costache Caragiale is responsible for the troupe producing original drama, Alterescu identifies Caragiale as a student at Philharmonic Society (founded in 1834) where many of Romania's actors were trained under the guidance of Constantin Aristia. Alterescu gives Caragiale a great deal of credit after his graduation as being the "man who was to maintain the spirit of the Philharmonic Society and keep alive the flame of the Romanian theatre" (34).

Alterescu's report of theatre in Jassy reiterates earlier accounts of Gheorghe Asachi. Alterescu also names Asachi as the initiator of the "first dramatic performance in Romanian" (34). However, where Lamb is satisfied claiming Asachi recruited a company and in 1836 founded the Philharmonic Dramatic Conservatory, Alterescu maintains that Asachi adapted a pastoral by Salomon Gessner called *Myrtle and Chloe* and staged it in 1816. Alterescu goes on to say

> [h]istory regards that event as the birth certificate of the Romanian theatre in Jassy. The actors wore national costumes. A painter and decorator, together with a flyman, turned the drawing room into a miniature theatre. Besides other

> stage properties they made a curtain on which a symbolic, allegorical picture was painted: Apollo surrounded by muses held out his hand to Moldavia, inviting her to step into the realm of art. (34)

It seems apparent from this quote that in this region, as in the rest of Europe, the notion of national identity was being investigated. Alterescu does not elaborate on the "national costumes;" I infer he means that the actors were dressed like people in Jassy would typically be attired.

Alterescu also introduces other theatrical events in Jassy that are not referenced by either Lamb or Mischiu. For example, he claims that there was a thriving amateur theatre movement in the early part of the 19th century, with performances being held in the drawing rooms of the aristocracy. He maintains that foreign actors traveling through Moldavia were invited to participate in these performances. Alterescu also introduces the name Matei Millo, a Romanian "author and main interpreter" of *Military Festival*, a play presented in 1834 by the pupils of the Quenim private school in Jassy. Interestingly enough, Alterescu makes mention of the 1839 visit to Jassy by Bucharest dramatist Costache Caragiale. According to Alterescu, Caragiale opened the theatre season in Jassy and was so successful there that he soon openened up a theatre company (35). Where Lamb offers Alecsandri as a possible bridge between Wallachia and Moldavia, Alterescu credits Caragiale as the source of a crossover. Having examined the reports from both Lamb and Alecsandri, I propose that both men were instrumental in assisting the movement toward a unified state.

In his description of theatre in Blaj (Transylvania), Alterescu traces the beginnings of theatre in Latin to the Catholic and Lutheran colleges in the 16th century. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate, merely stating that "the scholarly theatre of the 18th century Franciscan and Protestant lyceums founded in several Transylvanian burgs was particularly successful" (35). Again, he does not elaborate, but adds that "Blaj remained the hub of the scholarly theatrical movement" (36). He attributes this movement to the foundation of the Transylvanian School in 1754, where students performed plays (in Romanian!) in a Catholic school converted into a gymnasium. The school was run by Grigore Maior, a doctor of philosophy and theology who was educated in Rome. Maior was able to recruit the "best" students and offer them opportunities to perform plays. Alterescu's report that the students performed in Romanian is particularly noteworthy. Like Lamb and Mischiu, he claims that Romanian was spoken in Transylvania,

despite the fact that Transylvania's population was primarily Hungarian and German. The region was not part of either Wallachia or Moldavia, it was ruled by Austria. Alterescu also seems to be in agreement with Lamb and Mischiu that there were very early theatrical performances in Transylvania, as both he and Lamb put performances there in the mid to late 18th century, much earlier than any national theatre performances in Bucharest or Jassy. Alterescu mentions that in 1832

> A dramatic society was set up, formed of students and young intellectuals who, for several years, performed plays in Romanian. This kind of theatre, born out of the school drama circles, gradually gained full autonomy. When Gheorghe Baritiu moved to Brasov, a theatrical activity was started there as well. A growing interest in theatrical productions was manifest in Arad, too, the intellectual center of the Romanians from the western part of Transylvania. (36)

Each of these writers, despite the differences in their accounts of how Romania's theatrical tradition began, appears to agree that there were artists at work who were helping create a common culture that was articulated in Romanian.

Description of Project

My aim with this manuscript is to demonstrate how Romanian playwrights are creating hauntings. I intend to examine the ways these plays can be viewed as contested sites of history and national identity, sites of historical remembrance (recycling) and sites of reconstruction.

Carlson's notion that "This process of using the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena is fundamental to human cognition in general, and it plays a major role in the theatre" is especially germane here (6). I will engage in a poly-vocal dialogue with the playwrights, not merely to recapitulate their perspective, but to add my own analysis. I will attempt to avoid imposing another Western reading of these plays, instead helping to trouble an American understanding of Romanian history.

This is a significant case study for a variety of reasons, primarily that the nation of Romania is undergoing radical shifts in many key areas. The country was recently (2007) granted admission into the European Union; from the fall of communism (Revolution) through admittance into the EU (Transition) and still today, the nation is experiencing anxiety about what their actual identity is, particularly their "New European Identity." Issues of belonging are at the

forefront and are being examined through the works of various playwrights. According to Gerould, “The concern is less with the universal, the abstract, and the political than with the local and regional. The here-and-now is home, street, transport, workplace, and there are many problems about not being able to find one’s place: at home, in the family, at work, in society, in the nation” (xiii). A thorough examination of these plays, combined with their contradictory reports of history, will allow me to open up understandings of who/what they say they are. I will highlight how Romanian playwrights are using “haunted” texts/stories/myths to both define and re-define the nation.

The majority of my project will be analysis of specific texts by Romanian playwrights. The playwrights I have chosen to analyze are all Romanian by birth and upbringing and include the following: Saviana Stanescu, Stefan Peca, Bogdan Georgescu, Vera Ion, Cristian Panaite, and Gianina Carbunariu. Stanescu has lived exclusively in the United States since receiving a Fulbright Fellowship in 2001. Panaite earned his Master’s degree at Miami University of Ohio in 2007, and is now a PhD student in Texas, Georgescu completed his Bachelor’s degree at the University of Vermont in 2007, and Peca is based in Romania but spends time in the United States. Ion and Carbunariu live and work in Romania, although Ion just completed a year studying in England. Carbunariu, primarily a director, is affiliated with the Green Hours Club in Bucharest, a facility widely lauded for producing the works of contemporary Romanian playwrights.

The playwrights represent two different generations, yet the ways in which they attempt to constitute their nation have some areas of overlap. Stanescu worked as a writer during the period immediately following the Revolution (the Transition) and remembers “the way things were.” Peca, Georgescu, Ion, Carbunariu and Panaite are much younger (born between 1981 and 1986) and consider themselves children of the Transition rather than children of the Revolution.

Methodology

Contemporary Romanian playwrights are creating their own notion of history by incorporating recycled material into their texts, and this recycled material sets up what Carlson describes as “ghosting” for the audiences. He states

> Ghosting presents the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus a recognition not of similarity, as in genre,

> but of identity becomes part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably. (7)

Carlson speaks extensively about his concept of the "haunted stage" by subtitling the book "The Theatre as Memory Machine" and making five distinct categories of hauntings.[7] Because of the ways they invoke Romania's history and recent past, the plays I will discuss are rich in their potential for producing such hauntings, but the first step in understanding that potential is to look carefully at the textual strategies each text uses as it fractures, recycles, remakes the past in/for the present. This is the ground I intend to cover in the chapters that follow.

The plays I have chosen as evidence of hauntings each take a different approach to their method of recycling, but the material is very similar. None of the playwrights specifically details the events of December 1989, as Caryl Churchill does in her *Mad Forest*, but the reverberations of those few days are present nonetheless. Stanescu uses both Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu as characters in her play, and she evokes familiar propaganda from Romanian communism, but the other playwrights choose to be more subtle in their references. They use commonly held beliefs, sometimes those that are not spoken out loud, to attract and hold audiences' attention. In *Romania. Kiss Me!* Mr. Neagoe confesses to his fellow travelers

> I wouldn't trade Romania for anything in the whole world. And yes, I love all those things that Westerners hate so much. Yes, I spit sunflower seeds, and yes, I love to slaughter my own Christmas pig, and yes, I prefer to solve my own problems in my own way and avoid the nosey fucking caring community. It is very sad you can't live in Romania. (46)

In giving voice to the feelings of this character, Georghescu acknowledges those Romanians who are proud of their country and their culture, who are not as gung-ho about transforming their nation into something more in line with Western sensibility. By inserting lines like this, Georgescu complicates perception of his message: is he pro-Romania or pro-West? I suggest he is attempting to navigate both positions to broaden his appeal. He allows for criticism of the West without being too overt, but later in the play is far more blatant in his criticism of Romania.

Themes specific to the plays have emerged, so I will group the playwrights together around a particular theme. For example, the work of Panaite and Georgescu focuses on

[7] Carlson's categories are the following: the haunted text, the haunted body, the haunted production, the haunted house, and ghostly tapestries: postmodern recycling.

generational differences. How do the different generations view each other? How does Carlson's concept of "haunted theatre," or the recycling of material in an attempt to stimulate memory, fit? Is evoking these memories re-defining Romania for the people who still live there and for those on the outside? I will use one or two plays from each playwright as case studies, and may reference other works as well.

My primary methodology will involve close readings of the texts, paying particular attention to the ways in which the playwrights, all native Romanians, constitute their nation. In this examination, it is important to interrogate the information offered by asking the following questions: From which period of time (Revolution or Transition) does the playwright write? What issues are highlighted as part of the identity struggle? I will explore how the texts seem to position Romania in relation to other nations, and how the texts "imagine" or produce a version of the Romanian nation and people(s).

I have already conducted several interviews, with playwright Saviana Stanescu and with Artistic Director Constantin Chiriac, and have established communication via electronic mail with playwrights Stefan Peca, Bogdan Georgescu, and Cristian Panaite, with Marcy Arlin, Artistic Director of the Immigrants Project in New York City, who produced several plays by young Romanian playwrights, with Oana Radu, Deputy Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York, and with Radu Apostol, Romanian theatre director. In addition, I have made contact with someone at UNITER, the theatre union in Romania. These interviews play a critical role in the shaping of the dissertation, as I want to introduce the playwrights' voices alongside their work. My goal is to engage them, positioning their lack of agreement about Romania's identity against the backdrop of the lack of agreement among historians. My role will be to facilitate the conversations, always keeping my position in mind. I may insert myself occasionally, but I am much more interested in operating as a conduit to move the conversation along.

My educational background combined with my professional work informs this dissertation. I believe this project is geared toward people with similar backgrounds, specifically dramaturgs, literary managers, and theatre historiographers, as well as those interested in cultural and performance studies.

Significance

In the fields of Nationalism and Cultural Studies, this is the first analysis of the ways the Romanian nation is being constituted by playwrights writing in the early 21st Century. This project aims to be interdisciplinary.

The country of Romania has been reconstructed several times over the course of history. Geographical boundaries have been redrawn, land redistributed, and people continually displaced. Each time a new transition has begun, the country has been forced to re-conceptualize its identity. Through the uprising of 1989, the fall of communism and the public execution of President Nicolae Ceauşescu, the formation of a new government and entrance into the European Union, Romania is attempting to redefine itself. Despite this rich terrain for analysis, few theatre scholars have focused on Romania. There is a limited amount of scholarly information available focusing on theatre in Romania, and much of it highlights theatre from the mid-1800s and theatre under communism. While books or journal articles on the topic are rare, there appears to be some rising interest in Romanian performance among theatre professionals. Most notably, the May 2007 issue of *American Theatre* contained an article called "Restaging Romania" in which editor Randy Gener recounts his year-long study of Romanian theatre. Recently several United States theatre companies have helped elevate visibility of Romanian performance by featuring works from young Romanian playwrights, including Saviana Stanescu, Stefan Peca, and Vera Ion. For this project, I will draw primarily from dramatic texts, scholarly sources, my own experience in Romania, and interviews I have had or will have with Romanian theatre practitioners. The interviews are important because they will help facilitate the poly-vocal dialogue I mentioned earlier—my voice in conjunction with the playwrights' voices. I do not aim merely to report what the plays or playwrights say, but to open a dialogue that acknowledges the tension of the many versions of history and how this tension complicates our understanding of Romania.

The City University of New York publishes a journal called *Slavic and East European Performance*, but over the past twenty-five years, this journal has published fewer than twenty articles on Romanian theatre. In recent years, there have been a few publications that have specifically focused on Romania during the period immediately following the fall of communism (commonly referred to as the "Transition"). In 2008, Cipriana Petre completed her dissertation, which examines the work of three prominent Romanian directors during the Transition, but there

has been no major work examining the plays that are being written by Romanian playwrights and the ways the nation of Romania can be read through those plays.

Despite the fact that nationalism has long attracted interest in Theatre Studies, much of the work has emphasized the United States and Western Europe. In recent years (primarily since the fall of communism), scholars have begun to pay more attention to Eastern Europe and the ways theatre and nationalism intersect, but the efforts made on behalf of Romania are negligible. This project aims to fill one of the many gaps in the rich, overlapping areas of performance and cultural studies in the theatre.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 2—*Deconstructing/Reconstructing History*

The aim is to introduce the reader to Romania, and to enumerate the differences among nation/nationalism/national identity for the purposes of this dissertation. To that end, I will provide the reader with a condensed history of Romania and Romanian theatre. I will provide the reader with historical information about Romania, specifically how the nation developed, who the people are who reside in it, and how the term "nation" can be applied. There are several questions I will address regarding nation/nationalism/national identity, specifically the following: What underlies the notion of identity? How do people become national? How variously is nation symbolized? What is the global, societal and institutional context in which different groups (playwrights) compete to control this symbol (nation) and its meanings? These questions will be addressed in each subsequent chapter as I look at the various playwrights and examine the ways their writing in this new EU world is helping to shape our American understanding of the Romanian nation.

I will identify the nine historical regions and four historical provinces of Romania and give some general history about each of them. I will pay particular attention to the political changes that Romania has experienced since becoming a nation, and especially the changes that have occurred in the last twenty years since the Revolution. In December 2006 Romania was the first country in the world to officially condemn the crimes of communism; on January 1, 2007, Romania became a full-fledged member of the European Union.

As previously mentioned, there is a long and rich tradition of theatrical performances in Romania, dating back to the sixth century BCE. Despite early movements in performance, the lack of political stability in Romania hindered the development of a national theatre. Since the

late 1940s, theatre in Romania has undergone several changes. These changes are important because they point to the history of theatre in Romania; what is most evident in each of these periods is the importance that was placed on theatre (and culture in general) by the people of Romania, regardless of what else may have been occurring in the country. When the political climate in Romania changed in late 1989 with the fall of Ceauşescu, the theatres were in a position to re-think their approach and their role in Romanian culture. A new organization was formed, called UNITER (the Romanian Theatre Union). The mission of this organization is to foster creativity and international exchanges, stage festivals, arrange tours, and set up colloquia. In the last twenty-two years, since the fall of communism, Romanian theatre has experienced a more stable existence. There are over forty-two companies in operation, with the largest concentration of theatres in the capital city Bucharest. The national theatres from the mid-twentieth century continue to operate in Bucharest and the other regions, and there are theatres performing in Hungarian, German, and Yiddish.

In this chapter I will ask and investigate the question, "Why does Romania's theatrical tradition not include a tradition of producing the work of Romanian playwrights?" There is some evidence that during communism Romanian theatres were forced to perform "classics" out of fear that Romanian playwrights would put coded messages into their plays and attempt to rally the audiences to act out against the government. As a way of circumventing these strict rules, Romanian directors called upon Romanian myths and legends and visually rallied the audiences, but in a more secretive manner than the state could discern. Therefore, Romanian playwriting was subjugated in favor of directing, and many directors during this period would "re-write" the classic plays to suit their own needs. What is less apparent is why it took more than ten years (from the fall of communism in 1989 to the new era in playwriting in 2000) for a genuine playwriting movement to get started, and why the theatres in Romania are still far more likely to produce plays by Shakespeare, Chekhov, and the Greeks or even David Mamet and Sam Shepard than those by their own people.

Chapter 3—*Generation Gaps*

In this chapter I will examine the plays of Cristian Panaite, Vera Ion, and Bogdan Georgescu. Each of these playwrights focuses their work around the differences among generations, and the problems that these differences present. Do the characters from older generations (communist rule) mythologize or romanticize what happened to Romania? How do

the plays comment on the events that took place in December 1989 and immediately after? How do they depict the current situations in Romania? What is emphasized? What is disregarded? What does this information reveal?

As articulated in the section on methodology, Georgescu uses the character of Mr. Neagoe to give voice to those Romanians who are proud of their culture and the way life is in Romania. Mr. Neagoe is a middle-aged man who finds himself at odds with his fellow train travelers; they are less enthusiastic about their native land. In response to Mr. Neagoe's stance, Georgescu gives us Vasile (the youngest and most Westernized of the group) and Miss Renata (a sixty year-old woman) who clearly have different opinions. On page 45, Renata says, "Fuck this country of fucking cripples. That's it, right? My rotten luck. I was born in Romania." Vasile explains that she was named for her father because he always wanted a boy, and after five daughters decided to just go ahead and name one after himself. She represents the impetuous youth of Romania, coming on board wearing headphones, laughing at the other two characters, using profanity liberally. Neagoe and Vasile, an unlikely pair, are forced into camaraderie when Miss Renata suffers a fatal heart attack and they have to figure out whether or not to stop the train. Both have their reasons for wanting to go on, although both also have a fit of conscience when they decide not to stop. In the end, it is the middle-aged Mr. Neagoe who is the only character living, sitting on the train with Miss Renata's body, going forward to his destination out of the country.

Ion's *Vitamins* centers around what may be a typical 21st century Romanian family: Mother, Father, teenage daughter (Andrea) and son (Bro). The play's first scene takes place in a McDonald's restaurant, where "Bro" works. The play continues with the family members going about their lives barely aware of the others, as is evidenced by the fact that "Bro" is keeping a young mute girl hidden in his bedroom as a sort of sex slave. Father still spouts the communist party line, declaring in Scene 4, "If you work hard, you win big!" Daughter Andrea is a tennis champion who has lost her love for the game and focuses instead on watching music videos all day, and the parents are too consumed with how to spend their money to notice what is going on around them. Eventually both the parents end up having affairs right under the others' noses; Bro is murdered and his body is delivered to the house by his murderer, the man with whom Mother is having her affair; and the family becomes obsessed with a reality television show. The play

ends with the surviving family members playing at being a perfect family and alluding to how Romania can go about becoming a perfect country:

> FATHER**:** I am a father. I've always known how to choose my principles and . . . I've always won. Life is a lottery. Either you win, or you lose. If you want to be on the winner's side. . .
>
> ANDREA**:** You have to clean up.
>
> FATHER**:** You have to keep fresh.
>
> MOTHER**:** You have to keep a good vacuum cleaner and some clean clothes near you.
>
> FATHER**:** You have to cut off the rotten branches.
>
> ANDREA**:** So you don't get rotten. . .
>
> FATHER, MOTHER, ANDREA**:** From their stinking smell. (100)

Panaite's *Bus* and *Family Ties* also focus on different generations and their ideas of the country. *Bus,* which is subtitled "All for one and one for all" looks at a group of young people and one older woman from different backgrounds waiting to gain entry into a Schengen country.[8] Also on the bus is a young woman and her unseen child. As the characters wait, they argue about their reasons for leaving Romania for the west. Stereotypes of Romanians are explored early on, with one character accusing the other of being a beggar, and one accusing the other of going to the west to become a prostitute. There is a lot of discussion of "when I was your age" and "you don't know what it's like today" that goes back and forth among them, but ultimately the characters join forces to get themselves and their goods to declare off the bus. They divide up the goods among them, each carrying a balance of items that won't arouse suspicion. Eventually they decide to leave most of the items with a young mother and her sleeping baby, as middle-aged Leo says, "The custom officers don't care too much about young women with children . . . do they [. . .] I mean what are the chances. Just leave a bottle of vodka, some panties, some ham and cigarettes by the child and we are all settled" (18). The others agree with him, leaving a pile of items near the woman. The play ends with them pinching her to wake her up, hoping that she will agree to be the one to carry them all across the border. *Family Ties* also looks at different generations trying to leave Romania, but this time the

[8] Under the Schengen agreement, transiting from one country to another within the Schengen area is done without border controls. In fact, the Schengen visa makes it possible to visit all the countries in the Schengen area and to cross internal borders without further formalities. (http://www.axa-schengen.com/en/schengen-countries).

characters are all in the same family. The men are at the American Embassy in Romania, hoping to have their visas approved. The grandfather and grandson clearly represent perspectives from the different periods of time in Romania, and when the father arrives we see that he is representative of the Transition period. The three argue bitterly about their shared pasts, with the grandfather telling his son, "There is nothing to see. If there is one thing I am sorry for is that I had to lie a lot. I had to, in order to stay happy. It happened that I lost something dear to me" (13). The resonances with Romania's past are clear, and Panaite chooses to make the grandfather the most sympathetic of the characters—perhaps because he is the most willing to accept responsibility for his mistakes and to have hope for the future.

Chapter 4—*Dueling Influences*

This chapter will focus exclusively on the work of Saviana Stanescu. Since Stanescu has lived in the United States since 2001, most of her plays have been written outside of Romania. While I do not mean to suggest that she is not influenced by her Romanian heritage and upbringing, I will examine here the ways in which she is influenced by her life in America. I will look at the ways Stanescu combines myth and history from both nations to tell her stories. How does Stanescu position herself as witnesses/participant? What stories or circumstances does she include and what does she discard? How does the use of characters from both the US (West/them) and Romania (non-West/us) help us understand her definition of Romanian national identity?

I will use three of Stanescu's plays: *Waxing West, Lenin's Shoe,* and *Aurolac Blues*, each of which examines the notion of the "ideal America". *Aurolac Blues*, named after a kind of paint that is sniffed to get high, depicts two young street kids in Bucharest, Romania. The two, Elvis and Madona, sniff the aurolac and sit on the sidewalk talking. Elvis is convinced he is "transforming" into a vampire and that he will be invincible and able to protect Madona from anyone who might threaten her. Both characters give speeches about how long to go to America and experience the life they perceive Americans live. Just as in *Waxing West*, Stanescu complicates her perspective by juxtaposing her criticism of Romania's idolization of the West with skepticism of the American Dream. She infuses this very short play with Romanian stereotypes: vampires, Gypsy street children, and the desire to be just like Americans.[9] In *Lenin's Shoe*, Stanescu opens things up to characters from several different Eastern European

[9] *Aurolac Blues* is only nine pages long.

countries. The main character's name is Vlad, which is also the name of the historical figure upon whom Bram Stoker based *Dracula.* This Vlad is the wheelchair-bound, rap-star wannabe son of a Russian immigrant, who is tutored by a Romanian-Macedonian-Bosnian woman (Jasna) and befriended by her son, Alex. Stanescu examines how Eastern European immigrants navigate New York City as they attempt to recoup after the fall of communism and reclaim the word "home." The characters are well educated and articulate: Jasna has degrees in journalism and Slavic languages and offers a CV when applying for the job as Vlad's tutor. Stanescu appears to be upending the misconception held by many Americans that immigrants to the United States are not educated or intelligent. She also addresses perceived American indifference to world events when Jasna confesses early in the play, "It's normal people I can't handle anymore. I feel like shouting in their face: hey there are people dying out there and you're eating calmly your fucking pizza in front of your stupid TV!" (7). Stanescu does not shy away from criticizing her native country or her newfound home.

Chapter 5—*Individual vs. Society*

This chapter will examine the work of Stefan Peca and Gianina Carbunariu. Each of these playwrights looks at young people and how they are especially affected by their post-communist consumerist society. Both examine the role of the individual in the society, and the ways society shapes the individual. Both also rely heavily on images from the West, primarily as a means to criticize the Romanian people and their willingness to be so influenced by Western culture. What does their criticism (overt or suggestive) of the West indicate about Romania's position in the global community? By highlighting Western influences, are the playwrights negating any positive affect their plays might have in helping establishing a Romanian national identity? Does the use of satire appear to be more or less effective in getting the message across?

Peca's *Romania 21* begins with a song that lists the things he believes most Americans would recognize about Romania, including Nadia, selling babies, and Dracula. He then moves into a conversation between Ion, the protagonist, and God. Ion confesses that he is mediocre, doesn't have any particular drive to be successful, and communist. God replies by telling Ion,

> Don't worry if you don't have any real talents. Untalented people have more time for themselves, they have more time to lead the others. You're perfect for leading your country. Do whatever it takes to reach this goal, think only about yourself,

your land, your family. This is all about you. You have to be happy, you have to be satisfied. Do so, my child, and you shall live a happy and rich life. (115)

The play follows Ion on his quest for happiness, from communism, the Revolution, the Transition, and finally to acceptance into the EU. Along the way, Peca does not hesitate to criticize the choices his character makes, holding Ion up as the representative for Romanians during these different periods. Peca's play is a satire, exaggerating the choices and behaviors of his characters in order to make a point. His use of events that are so familiar is his way of drawing the audience in, but the image of Romania he unfolds is anything but positive.

Gianina Carbunariu's *Stop the Tempo* has some of the same qualities as Peca. Three twenty-something characters, who appear to have nothing to do but go club hopping, are chosen as the representatives of Romania. Maria, Paula, and Rolando are the names of the characters because those were the names of the actors who originally played them. Carbunariu claims that each character has a name, but the others don't know it so the names are of little consequence. These three are self-centered, materialistic hedonists. They are not interested in anything other than their own enjoyment, which they find comes by putting themselves and others into danger. Carbunariu mixes her own frustrations with her country into the play, highlighting Romanian theatre, reality television, and Romania's unwillingness to move forward in any meaningful way. She paints her picture using broad strokes, never acknowledging anything positive about Romania or its history. The play ends with one of the characters maintaining that she still has "a lot of projects planned for Romania" (35), implying that while Carbunariu is frustrated with her country's current state, she is not giving up on its potential for the future.

Chapter 6—*Coda*

To conclude the dissertation, I will return to the Sibiu International Theatre Festival in Sibiu, Romania, which I attended in 2004. The festival provides a concrete example of the way the nation of Romania uses the arts to define its position in relationship to the international community of nations. As such it suggests the importance of the issues raised by the Romanian playwrights I have discussed as they renegotiate and potentially transform their homeland's sense of past and present.

The people of Romania are poised at Turner's "betwixt and between" as they move away from the anxiety that surrounds their position in the global community. Now that Romania has been accepted into the EU, it is time for them to decide what identity they will choose to adopt.

Will they continue to look to the United States and Western Europe to determine their own worth, or will they consider the ways in which they can learn from the past? They face the possibility of moving out of the liminal phase and finally curing the anxiety that they have to constantly prove themselves to the outside world.

CHAPTER TWO

DECONSTRUCTING/RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY

> Perhaps we can try, not to forget history, but to be a little less obsessed with it. [. . .] The problems of the past must be solved with the means of the present and from the perspective of the present. [. . .] We cannot remain prisoners of the past. We must show that Romania means something, **today.**
> (Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* 26)

Lucian Boia's sentiment should not come as a surprise to anyone who knows the history of Romania. In the 150 years since Romania was officially recognized as an independent nation, the people who live there have experienced long periods of domination by others. The country was frequently subordinated, often falling prey to stronger and more stable countries. Its location in southeastern Europe, a contested area where cultures and governments are frequently at odds, places it in a precarious position. The memories of poor treatment at the hand of occupiers, coupled with dispossession,[10] create a victim mentality. Scholar and historian Tom Gallagher's essay "Nationalism and Romanian Political Culture in the 1990s" observes that some Romanians feel as though they have been bullied and battered for over a century, and attributes the rise of Romanian nationalism (in part) to a reaction to a feeling of being "less than." Since 1989 and the end of communist rule, there has been a strong push to throw off the past and demonstrate to the world (more specifically, the European community) that Romania is populated by intelligent, forward-thinking people who are committed to contributing to the global dialogue (104).

This chapter provides an overview of Romanian history and theatre. I will examine how theatre has changed over time, including during communism, the transition, and today. Understanding how Romanian theatre has changed, whether to reflect the changes in the nation or in an attempt to subvert said changes, is key. An examination of the cultural and historical context of Romania will help you better understand how the texts I examine function as hauntings and what role they play in re-shaping the identity of the Romanian nation.

---

[10] At various points in history, Romanians lost territory that was a part of the nation (i.e. Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania) as well as their own property, as they were forced to give up their homes to move into Ceauşescu's tower apartment blocks (called cutie de chibrituri, or matchboxes, in Romanian.) Lucian Boia, *Romania,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 101, 135-137.

Located in the southeastern corner of Europe, the country now known as Romania was formed when Wallachia and Moldavia united.[11] The initial unification was not without difficulty, as Romania's fate was in the hands of what were then the "great powers" of Europe. At first, Britain's Queen Victoria and Napoleon III could not agree about what should happen with the people or land, but ultimately decided to unite the lands as "United Principalities" with each area retaining its own ruler (a native), government, parliament, and army. The people of what would become Romania were not happy with this agreement and created their own plan to circumvent it. On January 5, 1859, the electoral assembly in Iași elected Colonel Alexandru Ioan Cuza to rule Moldavia. Three weeks later, the people of Wallachia elected Cuza to rule them as well. Cuza ruled both countries successfully for several years, all the while arguing that he would be more effective if he could rule them together from one city. On January 24, 1862, Britain and France agreed to appoint a single government, to be located in Bucharest (Boia 79). The people in what would become Romania, even in the beginning, were determined to have unification and were tenacious enough to insist on achieving it on their own terms.

Western influence was clear from the earliest moments of Romania's history. Initially, the people of Romania spoke Greek, dressed in Turkish style clothes, and wrote with Slavonic characters. A few decades later, the focus shifted from East to West, and the people of Romania wrote with Romanian characters, wore European clothes, and spoke French (Boia 82). Having been formed with the approval of European leaders, it can be argued that because Romania was in part a Western construction, its inclination to follow the West was an inherited trait. Separating Romania from Slavic and Orthodox influence was part of the process of establishing the Romanian nation. Romania began allying itself to Latin countries in Europe, in particular France (Boia 83).

Nine regions and four provinces make up the territory of Romania. [12] While the majority of the people who live there identify themselves as Romanian, there are people of several other

---

[11] Prior to this unification in 1857, "ad-hoc assemblies" were elected in the principalities to represent their areas. Those elected represented all social levels, including the peasantry. The unanimous conclusion reached by the assemblies was that Romanians wanted unification as one state under the name "Romania," and for a Prince from one of the European ruling families to lead them. The consensus was that a foreign ruler would put an end to the internal rivalry for the throne and would give Romania credibility throughout Europe. Lucian Boia, *Romania,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 79.

[12] Transylvania (located in central Romania and surrounded by the Carpathian mountains), the Banat (borders Serbia), Crişana (borders Hungary), Bocovina (a part of the region known as Moldova), Moldova (commonly referred to as Moldavia by the Western press), Dobrogea (between the Danube River and the Black Sea), Maramureş (borders Ukraine to the north and Hungary to the west), and Walachia (consists of two areas, designated by their

nationalities who make Romania their home. [13] The country has experienced its share of challenges, both political and geographical. In 1881, the Romanian parliament named Carol I the first king of Romania.[14] The government remained a monarchy until 1947, when the Soviets acquired Romania and turned it into a Soviet satellite state.[15] In 1952 Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was the unchallenged party leader; his rule lasted until his death in 1965. Nicolae Ceauşescu initially came into power in 1965 as the Head of the Communist Party in Romania. In 1974 Ceauşescu became President of Romania. He remained President until December 1989, when he was overthrown and executed by the Romanian people as the result of a violent revolt. Following Ceauşescu's death, the National Salvation Front (comprised of former Communist leaders) briefly ran the country. The fact that the new ruling party was made up Ceauşescu's former associates essentially paralyzed any forward momentum the Romanian people may have been looking to continue following the revolt of 1989. Very little changed in the first year following the end of communism.

In 1990, Romanians held the first national election for the position of President of Romania. The winner of the election, Ion Illiescu, a former ally of Ceaușescu, was scrutinized from the moment he took power. Illiescu came under fire for a variety of reasons, including the following: prior to his election, he claimed he wanted to create Romania's own "modified democracy," he was accused of manipulating the state media during the time of the elections, and his commitment to improving minority rights was questioned following a 1990 ethnic clash in Târgu Mureş (Phinnemore and Light 2). Illiescu was further criticized for using heavily armed

---

proximity to the Olt River: Muntenia to the east and Oltenia to the west. Romania's capital city Bucharest lies in the Oltenia region.) Lucian Boia, *Romania,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 14-15.

[13] 89.5% of those who live in the country identify themselves as Romanian, 6.6% as Hungarian, and 2.5% Gypsy, German, Ukrainian, Armenian, Croatian, Serbian, and Turkish. "The World Factbook: Romania," *Central Intelligence Agency*, 2002, 23 December 2011 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ro.html.

[14] Over the years, Parliament's control has varied depending on the ruler. Carol II and his successor Antonescu both suspended parliament's power in favor of an absolute monarchy. Under communist rule, Parliament was renamed the Great National Assembly, and was completely subordinate to the Communist Party. Lucian Boia, *Romania,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 105. At present, Parliament is made up of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and has representation from more than eighteen different political parties, including the Romanian Workers' Party and the National Peasants' Party. "Parliamentary Bodies," *Chamber of Deputies: Legislature 2008-Present,* n.d., 21 January 2012 http://www.cdep.ro/pls/parlam/structura.home?idl=2

[15] Romania was primarily allied to the Germans in World War II, although toward the end of the war they changed allegiance. Uniting with the Allies and Soviets to help secure an Allied victory did not change the fact that Romania was viewed as a defeated country, like their former ally Germany. One result of the brief, end of war alliance with the Soviets was a dependency on the Soviets. After the War, the Soviets turned Romania into a satellite state, occupied the nation for over eight years, and demanded that Romania pay massive reparations. Lucian Boia, *Romania,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 106.

miners to help squash anti-Illiescu protesters and to force the removal of Prime Minister Petre Roman. In the introduction to their anthology *Post-Communist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition*, Light and Phillemore claim that the period under Illiescu, and indeed most of the 1990s, was more a transformation to socialism (reflecting more oppressive central and top-down controls) than a transition from communism to capitalism and democracy (10). Illiescu served as Romania's President from 1990-1996, and again from 2000-2004. He remained in power for a total of ten years; his reign was the subject of frequent criticism from the West as he attempted to rehabilitate nationalist symbols from before 1945 in an effort to use "historical commemorations to identify with episodes and individuals from Romania's past best felt to exemplify the country's greatness" (Gallagher 107). This attempt to reinvigorate Romanians with evocative figures, memories, and events from the past was, in Gallagher's opinion, a significant obstacle to the democratization of Romanian society. While Illiescu's tactics may be responsible for helping delay the adoption of democracy in Romania, by reintroducing these memories and symbols from the past, he effectively haunted Romanians into action.[16] Eventually Romanians lost confidence in Illiescu and grew tired of the focus on the past rather than the future. In 2004, the Romanian people took to the polls and voted for a candidate they believed would help propel the nation forward in the global community; Traian Băsescu was elected President and he continues to serve today. Băsescu took power just as Romania joined NATO, and is credited for helping shepherd its 2007 entry into the EU.

More than twenty years after his execution, the period of communism under Ceaușescu remains a daily presence in Romania. Ceaușescu is recognized for being a particularly cruel leader. During his reign, the people of Romania were subjected to many hardships, not the least of which was the loss of personal property and a forced relocation into "workers districts." According to Boia's *Romania*,

> The city's most picturesque district was destroyed, with its old houses and gardens, churches and monasteries spread over the hillside. Tens of thousands of people were evacuated. It was not just the buildings that disappeared, but the hill itself. Ceaușescu had it flattened. (289-290)

[16] The images of the past had the opposite effect than Illiescu intended—the Romanian people decided that rather than relive the past, they were ready to move toward a new system of government (democracy).

Ceaușescu moved thousands of people from their family homes in the towns around Bucharest into smaller homes in the city so that he could keep an eye on them, ostensibly to keep them in line. Eventually, many of the larger, historical homes in Bucharest were turned over to the government, against the will of the owners, and more modest homes were razed in favor of blocks of apartment complexes. Construction began on buildings that paid homage to Ceaușescu. Ceaușescu enforced a strict language of propaganda, limiting personal freedoms and privacy, and eventually taking even the most basic of needs from his people. He limited water, heat, and electricity, and subjected people to the constant paralyzing fear of his secret police, the Securitate. Homes, especially those of citizens who had been identified as rebels, were subjected to surveillance and people were afraid of even thinking thoughts that could be construed as anti-party. Families were forced to turn on one another and neighbors spied on neighbors in a desperate attempt to avoid scrutiny. Many Romanians lived in constant fear that something they said or did would be misinterpreted and they would be punished. According to Patrice McMahon's essay "Nicoloae Ceaușescu" in the book *Encyclopedia of Human Rights, Volume 1,* punishments for challenging government policy included imprisonment, "disappearance," death, and confinement in psychiatric institutions (275). Historian Gale Stokes' *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* reports other notable punishments, including the three editors from one of Romania's national newspapers (*România Liberă)* who were sentenced to death when they attempted to "publish an anti-Ceauşescu edition of their paper in the spring of 1989" (162). Other restrictions during this reign included virtually no access to abortions or divorce, and a campaign against anything perceived as "Western decadence" like long hair, miniskirts, and smoking (McMahon 274). The people of Romania were restricted in every conceivable way under Ceaușescu, and reminders of life during that period are painful.

All over the nation there are remnants of life during communism. Some of these remnants carry ironic resonances. The Palace of the Parliament, for example, stands in Bucharest. The building, intended as the seat of political and administrative power, was originally named the House of the Republic and designed to be the primary residence of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu. The building was envisioned and nearly completed during Ceauşescu's reign. Standing twelve stories high, the Palace takes up nearly 700,000 square feet, and is constructed almost entirely of materials from Romania. Ceauşescu intentionally chose Romanian-made materials in an effort to demonstrate how this massive project was for and made by the people of Romania. It may be

considered the ultimate symbol of nationalism; it is certainly a symbol of life during Ceauşescu's reign, which for many Romanians was a difficult time. Commonly referred to as the People's Palace, even the name of the building speaks to its status as a contested space. While the Palace may have been constructed by hundreds of Romanians, it was never intended for the Romanian people. The ostentatious building stands where thousands of historic homes and gardens once stood. Ceauşescu is accused of attempting to raze the entire city of Bucharest in favor of a bigger, better version. Tour books encourage visitors to Romania to plan a trip to see the space in order to appreciate what life was like during communism; for most Romanians, this building is a far cry from the reality they lived (Boia 288-292). Romanians were crammed into small apartments and forced to exist on the bare minimum; the luxury of the Palace is a stark contrast to the deprivation most experienced on a daily basis. The constant visual reminder of what little regard Ceauşescu had for his people was most likely difficult enough, but there were certainly other elements of life during his reign that made life exceedingly hard for many Romanians.

In her book *Censorship in Romania*, Romanian scholar Lidia Vianu addresses how Romanian writers coped with constant ideological shifts under communism. She interviewed dozens of prominent Romanian literary figures to hear firsthand how they managed to produce material during this time. Vianu's book contains testimonies designed to demonstrate how writers in three different groups reacted to censorship and its aftermath. She categorizes the groups as follows:

> The first group consists of writers educated before World War II, who had to learn how to pretend later in life. They learned it well, but kept their innermost freedom. Some still speak the wooden language of imposed silence. The second group includes writers who may have had the privilege of a number of school years under an earlier regime, but who had to start—if possible, to continue—publishing under the communists. They adapted, fell silent for decades, even went to prison or defected. Each choice was hell. This generation most bitterly experienced censorship in Romania. What they say now about the maiming of their speech and their efforts to preserve their sanity is tragic. For those who adapted very well and actually managed to fool—or cooperate with—the censors, one must read between the lines. The third group was born under communism. In our case, this was neither lie nor die, but survive at all bitter costs. Some

> published a lot and used the famous "lizards"—truths in disguise, which fooled the vigilant eye of the Party. Others became cryptic, and many wrote for the drawer, as the saying goes. Romanian writers had lived in a concentration camp of the mind, and they have been rushing out of it, amazingly self-assured, as if they had been free forever. (ix-x)

While Vianu is specifically talking about the writers she interviewed for her book, similar rules existed regarding what could be said or done for those who were not writers. The writers of the plays I will examine emerged under the circumstances detailed by Vianu. With the exception of Stanescu, who worked as a writer during the latter part of Ceaușescu's regime and can be viewed as a link between groups, these playwrights make up a fourth group of writers not interviewed by Vianu. Since Vianu's book was published in 1998, years before many of these playwrights began writing, they were not included in the original work. It is crucial that their perspective be heard, as these playwrights represent the group whose work was born after communism ended. They write about the struggles Romanians faced following the fall of communism and as they attempted to redefine themselves as a nation. These are the writers who are haunted by the past without necessarily having lived it. They are influenced by Vianu's "concentration camp of the mind" as much as they are by the nation's newfound freedom. They, like many of their fellow Romanians, exist in a contested site—a place of memory and inherited dreams and nightmares that restricts their efforts to move beyond its confines.

Arguably the most contested site in Romania is the region known as Transylvania; the region's association to Dracula and its diverse ethnic population effectively haunt the plays examined here and people's imaginings of what Romania is. Located right in the center of Romania, this region is home to many different ethnic groups. Transylvania has long been a touchy subject between Romanians and Hungarians, as each group claims it as their own. Between 1919 and 1947, sovereignty over Transylvania changed three times,[17] with Transylvania finally being recognized as a part of the Romanian nation. While Transylvania may "officially" be Romanian, there are still a large number of Hungarians who reside there.[18] In fact, several of the towns in Transylvania use Hungarian (and sometimes German, depending on

[17] Romania was granted Transylvania in the Treaty of Versailles; during World War II, Northern Transylvania was annexed to Hungary, and then following World War II the Treaty of Paris returned all of Transylvania to Romania.
[18] Overall, Hungarians make up just under 20% of the population of Transylvania. However, there are certain towns in Transylvania in which Hungarians make up more than 50% of the population.

the population) signage. For example, in Târgu Mureş, a town with a population of approximately 50% Romanians and 50% Hungarians, wherever a Romanian word is used to identify something (a street name, a monument, the name of the town), the same word in Hungarian is also posted. While it may seem idyllic that there is a shared acknowledgement of the two different languages and ethnicities, life is often complicated by the unrest and frustration that exists between the groups. Life in Transylvania is relatively stable, especially since 2007 and Romania's entrance into the EU.[19] At times, however, differences between the groups flare up and Transylvania's status as a contested site is reinforced (Cartner 15-16).

Despite Romania's new status in the global community, these contested sites (the Palace of the People as a reminder of life under communism and Transylvania as an example of how tensions, especially ethnic tensions, remain very present) haunt its citizens, reminding them that life was difficult, and to some extent continues to be. Similar reminders of life during communism exist more than two decades after the Revolution of 1989. [20] These reminders make it difficult to move on. Possibilities for moving forward do exist,[21] however, including via the theatre. Romanian playwrights have the opportunity to create new stories and histories for the stage, but some, especially those in this analysis, choose to recycle stories from the past. This recycling is a way to re-write the history of Romania and help the people of Romania move forward. In addition, these playwrights are including information about the present and addressing the need to deal with the tensions that exist. By retelling stories from before and during communism, using metaphors that are about communism and the transition, and reusing themes from these periods, Romanian playwrights are effectively keeping Romania's history (past and not so distant past) in the forefront. In so doing, the playwrights use their texts to confront memories (or perceptions, as the case may be) of the past and make recommendations for moving forward. At the same time, these playwrights are using material from the current reality of life in Romania; playwrights do not shy away from criticizing their fellow Romanians' emphasis on consumerism and capitalism, their love of all things western, or their inability to recognize that the end of communism did not signal the beginning of an ideal life in Romania.

[19] As part of Romania's entrance into the EU they had to demonstrate that the treatment of ethnic minorities in Romania was improving.
[20] Some of these other reminders include the apartment blocks all throughout Bucharest, and the ways in which communism as "heritage" is promoted to tourists of Romania, especially in Bucharest.
[21] Especially since Romania is now part of the EU and a recognized member of the European community.

Traditionally, theatre in Romania did not focus on plays by Romanians. Indeed, many Romanian playwrights spent a considerable amount of time translating other playwrights' works into Romanian to prepare them for production. Shakespeare, Moliére, and Schiller were all produced in the early 19th century, and plays by Goethe and Hugo appeared soon after. The fashionable melodramas of France's boulevard theatres were very popular in Romania during the mid 1800s, as was vaudeville. As previously mentioned in this chapter, Romanians, especially the elite, considered France their "Latin brother" and a model for all things cultural and intellectual. Many Romanians, including those in different classes, learned to speak French. The ability to speak French allowed them to attend shows presented in French without need of translation into Romanian. After 1850 there was a shift to historical drama by Romanians, but the popularity of non-Romanian playwrights never fully waned (Alterescu 54-56). This shift to Romanian historical drama may be result of inspiration from the historical dramas of other European nations.

At various points in history, Romanian playwrights have held positions of esteem. Rarely were these playwrights ever *just* playwrights, so it is difficult to ascertain whether the esteem comes from the characters they wrote or the contributions they made to directing, acting, and managing. In the 19th century, Vasile Alecsandri (1821-1890) and Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912) were the most prolific playwrights.[22] Caragiale in particular is lauded and said "to have done for Romania what Mark Twain did for the Mississippi Valley" (Lamb 22). Both men wrote plays specifically satirizing life in Romania and the people of Romania; Caragiale was so revered that the National Theater of Bucharest was named for him (Teatrul National Ion Luca Caragiale Bucureşti). In addition to his work as a playwright, Caragiale was also the Director of Theatres for one season (1888-1889); Alterescu credits him with furthering innovations in staging, encouraging theatrical research, and helping stimulate the modernization of performances, thereby raising the level of work produced (Alterescu 49).

In the early part of the 20th century, several Romanian playwrights were influenced by those who had preceded them. Comedy, especially satire, was still very popular, but playwrights were also beginning to explore allegory, fantasy, and themes including issues of morality and the conflict between man and society (Alterescu 64-66). The willingness of the playwrights to

[22] I.L. Caragiale came from a theatrical family; his uncle, Costache Caragiale, is recognized as one of Romania's most influential actor-managers.

explore these themes could be attributed to a growing sense of social and cultural awareness among Romanian people. Considering the difficulties that many in Romania faced on a daily basis,[23] and the growing economic divide among the people, it is possible that Romanian playwrights were exploring these forms in an effort to reach a broader audience and to prove that theatre was not only for the upper class. As with the 19th century, playwrights in the 20th century were more than simply playwrights. Many of them were poets who tried their hand at dramatic literature as well. Notable in this group of men is Victor Eftimiu (1889-1972), who combined Romanian folklore with the styles of Henrik Ibsen and Maurice Maeterlink to introduce symbolism to Romanian audiences. Eftimiu demonstrated interest in several different types of dramas, including re-interpretations of ancient tragedies, satire, and national historical dramas. Victor Ion Popa (1885-1946), considered by many to be an "experimental psychologist" of theatre, participated in several different arts, among them painting and music, and is recognized more for his social commentaries and children's theatre than anything else (Lamb 23-27).

The pattern of growth and change continued in Romania during and after the World Wars. Most notable, perhaps, was the shift from plays by "foreign" playwrights to those by Romanians. Romanian playwrights were influenced by the world around them, including movements like expressionism, biomechanics and constructivism, surrealism, and dadaism. This period also brought forth a newfound emphasis on social and historical drama; playwrights were focused on exposing the corruption and cruelty in the underbelly of society.[24] Alterescu speculates that this period is characterized by "rapid historical evolution […] the changes wrought by internal and international revolutionary events" (84).[25] Ruth Lamb suggests that playwrights during this time considered themselves responsible for changing society by bringing audiences' attention to the plight of man vs. the world's evil forces (24). The themes that were being explored in Romania are not drastically different than what writers in other European countries were examining, including destiny, generational differences, and how an honest man should deal with a corrupt society.

At the onset of communism, the Romanian government nationalized all theatres. The result was the emergence of playwrights whose work demonstrated changing government policy

[23] Many in Romania, especially in Transylvania, made their living working in the mines. This was dangerous and difficult work.
[24] Due to the timing of these plays, it is possible that the playwrights were influenced by the country's new status as a Communist nation and the growing unrest between Romania and the Soviet Union.
[25] Notably both World Wars, Romania's newfound status as a Soviet state, the contention over Transylvania.

regarding the arts. The resulting plays depicted life under communism as idyllic. According to Gerould,

> [i]n the old East bloc of Soviet satellites, totalitarian control and fostering of the arts through censorship, financing, and organization made the theatre a part of the state apparatus and a tool of the regime. Theatre enjoyed a privileged position because the state needed artists to validate its existence and propagate its myths both at home and for export. To make the stage a showplace for communist ideology, the totalitarian rulers wooed theatre artists and tried to attract the best talent. (vii)

For playwrights, the added attention from government officials was a double-edged sword. On one hand, they were able to continue their craft, but on the other hand, they were never fully in charge of the work. Playwrights were forced to occupy a contested site, where many attempted to subvert the very system that was sustaining them. Playwrights became quite skilled at using myth, metaphor, and images that brought to the stage issues of freedom vs. tyranny, the individual beaten down by society, and the pressure to obey the rules. Playwrights became more adept at coding their plays and audiences were learning how to decipher those codes. [26] The theatre's importance grew in Romania, as it offered a site for intellectual dialogue and debate, and a respite from the constant flow of information from the state-controlled propaganda machine.[27] Audiences placed additional importance on the theatre for its ability to circumvent the watchful eyes of the government and playwrights grew increasingly uncomfortable in the tenuous position they occupied. The result was, according to Gerould, "the demise of playwriting" in Romania (viii).

While plays by Romanians were heavily examined and censored under communism, productions of plays from non-Romanian playwrights continued with only limited scrutiny. Marian Popescu's *The Stage and the Carnival: Romanian Theater After Censorship* talks about the influence of these non-Romanian plays on the emerging "dissident theatre" of the 1970s into the 1980s. [28] According to Popescu,[29] dissidence had not been a major issue up to this point; as I

[26] See Vianu's earlier reference to the "lizards"—slippery expressions of dissent—utilized by writers to subvert censorship.
[27] Including newspapers and radio broadcasts.
[28] Popescu's text addresses theatre in Romania over history, not just the end of communism.
[29] A Romanian theatre critic, Popescu is also the founder of UNITEXT, a publishing organization, so he knows which plays are being published and subsequently produced, and which are not.

mentioned earlier, playwrights became skilled at coding their work, but this skill was not really utilized until several decades of communism had passed. Until this point, most Romanians did what they were told when they were told to do it, and did not complain. This may have been because they were afraid of the consequences (i.e., the Securitate would punish them), or it may have been because they did not know that protest was even an option. Popescu claims that dissident theatre came about as a result of some significant changes to Romania's cultural policies. In 1971, Ceauşescu visited China and brought back some of the "hardline" policies he witnessed there. After the visit, The Council of Socialist Culture and Education was established as the only office designated to handle the arts. Theatre was a hot topic during the Plenary of the Romanian Communist Party as members debated how to implement the new political and ideological ideas. As a result of new restrictions, Lucian Pintilie directed the "most important dissident theatre" in his 1972 production of *The Government Inspector (The Inspector General)* by Gogol (Popescu 21). Dissidence in everyday life was becoming more common, with Romanians supporting "Radio-free Europe" and workers vocally expressing their dissatisfaction. "Cases of critical theatre multiplied after 1978 and the audience felt the theatre as one of the few places, if not the only one, where they could get a sense of resistance against the worsening of life standards and political pressure" (Popescu 23).

The Romanian people appear to have been getting more and more frustrated with the way of life they had been forced into, and more and more creative about expressing that frustration. For most Romanians, life was difficult during communism; due to their position in the public eye, artists were frequently targeted by the state for their potential to spread the message of the Communist Party. Indeed, while some writers were content to spread Party propaganda, there were also those brave and clever enough to rebel against the regime. The punishments for these artists were often more strict than for ordinary Romanians, simply because they were so visible. Punishment for rebellion ranged from being banished from jobs to imprisonment. The state seized the opportunity to demonstrate what would happen to any Romanian if they stepped out of line. Popescu does note that some Romanian playwrights chose to leave the country rather than attempt to fight regime within. Of those, Popescu reports

> [u]sually their name was erased on all the publicity materials of the theatre and his [sic] name put on a black-list: he/she was not to be mentioned in any media. The only exceptions were artists who got permission to work abroad and eventually

> came back in the country. The Securitate and, if some of them were party members, the Party organizations which existed in every theatre, put under pressure the family and their relatives. (29)

Popescu's quote demonstrates the dual pressures exerted on playwrights, by both the regime and audiences. I will argue that despite these pressures, Romanian playwrights viewed their plays as a way to share their observations and experiences with the Romanian people.

In 1989, communism fell in Romania. For many theatre artists this appeared at first to be a golden opportunity to leave censorship behind and focus on their newfound freedom. According to Marian Popescu's article "In Cinderella's Shoes,"

> This interim period saw social convulsions, political bargaining and negotiations, and fear of answering new challenges with a definite "yes" to freedom, democracy, and capitalism. The performing arts had to respond. Many theater artists feared for their jobs, while new authorities restructured theater institutions through wrongheaded policies and inadvisable measures and met resistance from a great part of the theater world to any changes that might change the order established before 1989. All of these factors pointed to a future shaped by two distinct attitudes: inertia, on the one hand, and change, on the other, provided by the younger generation of artists. (15)

Popescu is marking the distinction between "established" theatre artists (those with an attitude of inertia) and those advocating change (the younger generation). Even though these new artists may have felt initial optimism about the fall of communism, bringing about change proved more difficult than anticipated. Many theatres did not change the way they chose seasons or did business; the primary change was to the amount of money provided by the state to keep things running. The large amount of funding to which theatres had become accustomed under communism was no longer available. The formation of UNITER did much to help ease the transition for theatre artists (from one political regime to another), as it helped create the framework to support Romanian theatre artists, by them together in an environment focused on supporting freedom of expression.

Despite the new political structure and the creation of organizations like UNITER,[30] which are intended to breathe new life into theatre, Romanian national theatres continue to follow a style of producing that has been in place for decades—a repertory-style season. In 1970, there were basic directions repertory theatres followed: promotion of Romanian classics and staging world literature (Popescu 39). Initially, under communism, these plays had to fit into the mold of what could and could not be discussed, which meant that the plays that were chosen to comprise a repertory were inevitably historical dramas praising great Romanian figures. Today, most Romanian theatres, particularly the very large National theatres, have about twenty plays they cycle over and over,[31] a structure leaving little room for additions. Based on a review of major theatre seasons, the majority of the plays in companies' repertoires can be considered "classical," as rarely does a play published after 1960 appear. The Western playwrights whose names appear most frequently are Shakespeare, Moliére, Lorca, Goldoni, Chekhov, Aristophanes, and Euripides. There are a few Romanian playwrights whose work is regularly produced, notably classic writers Victor Ion Popa, I.L. Caragiale, and Victor Eftimiu.[32]

Unlike the big National Theatres, smaller venues are more focused on presenting the work of new playwrights.[33] Rarely are these spaces used exclusively for theatre, however. Most times the space is divided among music, film, and theatre—appealing to a younger audience. Many of the playwrights whose work I examine debuted their plays at spaces like these. Because these are the places where emerging playwrights can be produced, their work tends to reflect the audiences who frequent the venues. Seating and staging are flexible, the atmosphere tends to be much less formal than at the National Theatres.[34] The playwrights I reference in this work have

[30] Founded in 1990, UNITER is a "professional, apolitical, non-governmental and non-profit organization, resulted from the free association of artists from the theatre industry. The founding principles of this professional organization were the freedom of expression, of creation and association, the right to autonomy, the right to express oneself freely within the national and international cultural medium, an opening free of complexes towards world culture and, without a doubt, the defense of common interests of the many kinds of professionals working in the theatre industry" "About Us," *UNITER,* n.d. 21 January 2012 http://www.uniter.ro/About-us/.

[31] It is possible that the plays that bring in the best reviews and the biggest audiences appear more frequently than others, but that information is not readily available in English.

[32] This information is the result of a survey I conducted of the last five seasons of the following theatres: Tony Bulandra Theatre (Târgoviste), Victor Ion Popa Theatre (Bârlad), Toma Caragiu Theatre (Ploeşti), National Theatre of Timişoara, Teatrul Mic and Teatrul Foarte Mic (Bucharest), Theatre of the State (Constanţa), Teatrul Odeon (Bucharest), National Theatre of Craiova, National Theatre of Bucharest, and Green Hours Club (Bucharest).

[33] Including *Teatrul Mic* and the Green Hours in Bucharest.

[34] The consumption of alcohol is permitted, as is smoking. Audiences frequently get up and move around during productions, visiting the bar, using the bathroom, chatting with friends. These spaces are intimate, as is the atmosphere.

managed to carve out a niche for themselves in Romania, however, Popescu claims that their successes are not indicative of a resurgence of Romanian playwriting.

> There's no place for experimental work and the idea of a "workshop" is yet very new. There is a fear among theatre professionals to try and do new work, experiment, pick up plays which don't have the cultural "safety-belts" of classic works. It is very rare that you can see on stage a play by a contemporary Romanian author, and this recalls the circumspection or hostility with which original Romanian plays have often been considered. (18)

The scarcity of Romanian plays being produced may just be an indication of how Romanian playwrights are perceived as less important than Western playwrights. Both playwright Bodgan Georgescu and UNITER employee Aura Gaidarji make similar observations about the practice of disregarding Romanian playwrights from production consideration, but come from very different perspectives. Gaidarji claims, "For the moment the Romanian dramaturgy is not very well developed. Mostly the new writers don't have a strong plot in their plays. It's more about talking about ideas" (personal correspondence August 25, 2010). Georgescu, on the other hand, is not willing to place the blame on any deficiency on the part of playwrights. Instead, he asserts that the tradition of dominance in the theatre by directors for the last 60 years has contributed to the current state of Romanian theatre, most notably the dearth of Romanian plays produced (personal correspondence October 5, 2010).

Georgescu's comment about directors being the focus in Romanian theatre is not particularly surprising. Much of what has been written about Romanian theatre focuses on directors, particularly those who emigrated during communism and then returned in the 1990s to "reinvigorate" the theatre. In 1990, Andrei Şerban, Liviu Ciulei, and Silviu Purcărete returned to Romania to work in the first "free" season. Şerban was appointed Director of the National Theater in Bucharest, where he remounted his 1974 American production of *The Greek Trilogy*. That same year, Purcărete directed *Ubu Roi* at the National Theater in Craiova. The production was a critical and box office success, due in part to the fact that Pere and Mere Ubu were clearly recognized as Elena and Nicolae Ceauşescu (Popescu 16). In addition to the work done by Şerban and Purcărete, Romanian directors Mihai Măniuţiu, Victor Ioan Frunză and Gabor Tompa mounted productions by Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Ionesco in the early 1990s (Popescu

18). The cycle of producing work by non-Romanian playwrights continued, even as Romanian directors returned to add life to the theatre.

Younger director/playwrights were not content to sit idly by and let those who had come before them do all of the creating. In 2002, several of them joined together to launch dramAcum (Drama Now). The mission of this group is to promote new Romanian plays, thereby opening theatre up to a new audience. Part of the mission includes directing "public attention to the fact that Romania is today living a new history and to remind audiences that the world is larger than their home, city, and country—can be inferred from the drama" (Popescu 18). UNITER has provided assistance for this group via their publishing department UNITEXT. Increased visibility of these new playwrights and their approach to theatre has increased the quality of written work and directing the public to the fact that Romania is "living a new history" (Popescu 18). This notion that the drama is being used to redirect Romanians away from the past and toward a "new history" is in line with my thesis, but I argue that playwrights are *invoking and leveraging* the past in order to arrive at that "new history."

Popescu's article describes the reception young Romanian playwrights initially received by Romanians,[35] specifically Bucharest audiences, observing that they were

> [s]ubjected to intense criticism. Some audiences did not like them at all because of their harsh language and uncomfortable social subjects. Not only do they make direct criticisms of the theater establishment, they offer radical points of view on Romania's present situation and this 'brave new world' of capitalism and social democracy. (19)

While it may be difficult for these young playwrights to receive criticism from the very audience with whom they are attempting to engage, there was a positive aspect to the criticism: by talking about what they had seen audiences succeeded in keeping it in the public consciousness.[36] Just by virtue of being discussed, the production generates hauntings. The very material critical audiences were trying to undermine became part of the discussion, similarly to how theatrical events did during censorship and communism.

Romanian theatre has been and will continue to be a critical component in the nation's entree into the global community. Gerould maintains that

---

[35] The artists referenced in Popescu's article were all in their early twenties.
[36] Popescu is not specific about whether or not these discussions happened in the press or in a type of talkback forum after the productions.

> To convey a sense of lived experience, colored by irony and mockery, but not devoid of compassion, the new generation of Romanian playwrights has created a fresh theatrical language and forged a new relation to a young audience into whose lives it has entered and whose fears, frustrations, and desires it expresses. This is a drama fraught with risks but full of possibilities. (xiv)

The next several chapters will investigate the ways in which the new generation of Romanian playwrights is going about developing this “fresh theatrical language” and how they are helping shape Romania’s place in the global community. The tradition of theatre in Romania, especially the tradition of using theatre as a means to spark discussion and debate, lives on in these new voices. While they develop new ways for communicating with the audience, these playwrights also cling to stories that are well known. In this way, the plays intervene in and re-shape the identity of Romania as a nation, whether writing from within or outside the “home” land.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERATION GAPS

> Seen through the eyes of its new generation, Romania looks completely different than in official reports. Each of these playwrights has a different story to tell, but if you look at all these plays and make a puzzle out of them, the image is very similar to the real one or at least it seems so. (Cristina Modreanu, "The Romanian Theatre Landscape Today" qtd. in Gerould 251)

Modreanu's assertion, that it is possible to view each of the plays contained in Gerould's anthology as parts of a whole picture of Romania today, provides a jumping-off point for this chapter. When taken as a whole, the plays depict a clear image of Romania today. Looking at how the plays revolve around particular themes has tremendous value—providing a clearer understanding of Romania's position in the global community. In this chapter I examine the plays of Vera Ion (*Vitamins*), Bogdan Georgescu (*Romania. Kiss Me!*), and Cristian Panaite (*Family Ties* and *Bus*). Each of these playwrights examines the differences among generations and the problems that these differences present, including the influence of Western ideals, lapses in communication, and willingness to criticize the Romanian nation. By drawing attention to some of the issues confronted by the different generations, these playwrights shed light on problems that may be holding the nation back from fully emerging from the shadow of communism. By focusing audiences' attention on intimately familiar issues, the play invites audiences to confront their memories of the past. This "haunting"[37] requires the audience to remember and reflect upon past experiences, effectively motivating them to action (attempting to move on) or inaction (refusing to move on).

Chapter Two provided a brief history of Romania and the nation's theatrical tradition, giving special attention to the changes during communism and the period known as the transition, which came immediately after communism. Understanding the difficulties that Romanians experienced during and after communism is key to my argument about haunting—each day the people of Romania are confronted by sights, sounds, smells, words, and actions reminiscent of life as it used to be. The regular confrontation of these memories inhibits the ability the Romanian people from moving past their history into a new position in the global

[37] As mentioned in the introduction, hauntings re-use material from the past in an effort to push audiences to action.

community. They appear to be stuck in a cycle of remembering/forgetting; the playwrights in this manuscript draw attention to the cycle, comment on it, and in some cases offer suggestions on how to break out of it.

Vera Ion was born and raised in Bucharest, Romania, and recently spent a year living in England. She is a graduate of the Theatre Directing Department of the National University of Theatre and Film (UNATC) in Bucharest, and one of the founders of tangaProject, a development group that "focuses on playwriting and connecting to up-to-date reality" (Arlin qtd. in Gerould 59). In 2005 Ion was selected as one of the winners of the second annual dramAcum contest; winning afforded her the opportunity to collaborate on continued development with a director and cast. Ion's play *Vitamins* premiered at the Teatrul Foarte Mic (Very Small Theatre) in Bucharest in December 2005, and continued running through 2007. It was also performed at the National Theatre of Belgrade in 2008.

Vitamins

The approach Ion takes in *Vitamins* is to evoke memories of the past and use them as a way to affect the future. The subject matter of the play leads me to label it a tragicomedy; as to the form of the play, Ion chooses to mix-and-match to find the most effective way of communicating with the audience by using Romanian (communist and transitional) and Western iconography. She incorporates visual (a popular Romanian reality television star, a Rock Star, McDonald's) and evocative (phrases and songs from the Communist regime) imagery. The characters' interactions with one another are realistic, even while the subject matter sometimes is not. Ion uses monologues mixed in with the dialogue. The play speaks primarily to a Romanian audience, although the text may resonate with other audiences as well. Theatre critic Constantin Vică, who reviewed the production at the Teatrul Foarte Mic in December 2005, agreed that the play could resonate with a non-Romanian audience,

> During the performance, scenes, relationships, stories, short movies are projected, taking you from the theater hall to the studio of a large imbecility show. Yes, it's exactly Romania, but it could be any other world connected to the simulacrum. (www.liternet.ro)

The prominent issues in *Vitamins* may have contributed to the play's lengthy run at Teatrul Foarte Mic. The generational divide is highlighted in *Vitamins*—the older generation, Mother and Father, feel a nostalgia for the life they once knew highlighted by the stark reality of the life they

lead now. Both communism and the transitional government influence Mother and Father and the choices they make. The younger generation, Andrea and Bro, are confounded by difficult choices: they are forced to address whether or not they will give in to the influence of the West, value the history and culture of their own country, or find a happy medium between the two. The two non-family members, Girl and Rock Star, [38] represent factors that influence the family (and other Romanians) at various times: Girl symbolizes the challenges many Romanians faced following the collapse of the Ceauşescu's regime. Like Girl, the nation was crippled by a devastated economy, its people were helpless to make improvements and unable to voice their fears and concerns, they were willing to go after what would make life better. Rock Star is the flash and glamour of the West/EU, dazzling the family with his "newness" and shaking up their lives in unimaginable ways.

The first scene of *Vitamins* takes place in a McDonald's restaurant in Bucharest. Employees are cleaning up for the evening, and the character named "Bro" is tasked with cleaning the children's play area where, in a large box of plastic colored balls, he finds "Girl," who is deaf and mute. The scene is free of dialogue, but the visuals foreshadow some of the issues the play addresses later on. The play's title, *Vitamins*, evokes thoughts of healthy living. McDonald's, on the other hand, is notoriously criticized in the United States for its contributions to the obesity epidemic, its use of trans-fats, and promoting unhealthy living. While the same criticism is not as widespread in Romania, articles predating the play lambast McDonald's as one example of the "Americanization" of Romania, reflecting an attitude that may have contributed to the context of the play.[39] McDonald's is clearly a Western institution with the Golden Arches the visual representation of the United States' presence in other countries. By making McDonald's the first thing the audience sees, Ion sets up the core of her play, which she says is "a typical Romanian family lost in transition, overwhelmed by occidental values, blinded by the western dream, but actually very sad, confused and dysfunctional" (personal correspondence, September 2010).

The dysfunction Ion referenced is apparent early on, as Andrea, the protagonist, gets dressed in front of her brother while the Girl sleeps, hidden after Bro brought her home from

---

[38] Deaf and mute character.

[39] In June 2001, several articles were written in the Romanian journal *Dilema*, which was renamed *Dilema Veche* in 2004. These articles include Miheala Irimia,"McEscu," *Dilema* (June 15-21, 2001) 1-8 and Bogdan Ştefânescu, "Why Can't the Romanian Be an American," *Dilema* (June 15-21) 9-13.

McDonald's. Andrea and Bro have a discussion about her breasts and about whether or not he had intercourse with Girl. The conversation and relationship demonstrates to the audience that Andrea and Bro are comfortable enough to talk about topics that might be considered taboo. In addition, the two have joined forces to hide Girl from their parents establishing the generational "us" vs. "them" binary that will continue to play out. We also begin to hear more about Andrea's tennis playing; tennis becomes a metaphor for the back and forth between the generations in this family and in Romania. As the family becomes less and less engaged and more and more dysfunctional, Andrea's tennis performance begins to wane. She is the perceived "victor" in her family, but she is easily affected by the choices her family makes, and carries those with her to the tennis court. Andrea as victor speaks to the generational tennis match—the younger generation has an advantage (youth), but constantly struggles to beat a difficult opponent (age/experience). This metaphor also serves as a haunting—the play reminds the audience of the generational divide.

The next few scenes provide important exposition about the characters and the lives they lead, reinforcing the generational differences and how each character chooses to approach decisions in the new global community. Andrea is deciding "to fuck or not to fuck" (65). It is not readily apparent whether she means the literal act of sexual intercourse, or if she means she is going to mess things up for someone else. She decides to flip a coin to help her make a decision. This casual approach to decision making may be a nod to the emphasis (or lack thereof) Romanian society places on carefully weighing decisions, or it may simply be an indication that Andrea is incapable of making a decision for herself. Father talks about his experiences as a college student complete with "days and days without shaving, without sleeping" and how different his life is now. He ends with an anti-communist statement,[40] "I work hard for my family. I don't have any time to wait" (66). Mother's brief monologue focuses on Andrea and what a champion she is:

> I didn't really trust her at first. She was so small and thin, and powerless…but she has a strong will. She kept on playing…And now, now her body is stronger, and it

[40] What identifies this statement as anti-communist is the inclusion of the word "family" and the exclusion of the word "country." In communist ideology, the worker's job is to work hard and contribute to the overall good of the country, not the good of the personal/family. For further information, see *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

> feels so good to see her in her white skirt on the field! Children really are our light, our hope. What would we be without our children? (66)

While the speech refers to Andrea it seems to reference when Romania first came out from under communist rule, when the nation and its people were shaky and viewed as weak by the global community. The people of Romania, however, were committed to overcoming their past and moving forward. The play emphasizes the importance of the newer generation and the critical role they play in continuing the established momentum of the previous generation. Mother, a member of the older generation, asks the question, "What would we be without our children?," reminding the audience that the future is in the hands of the younger generation.

Bro delivers his monologue to Girl, and it is the first time we hear Bro attempting to communicate with her. Bro generally speaks to her in a gentle manner:

> You like fairy tales? Fairy…tales…with fairies and stuff like that? Well…I don't know. No offense, I just don't know any fairy tales…Why not turn on some music instead? Oops…sorry. No way, you're laughing! You're laughing? You're incredible. You really have a sense of humor. You are the first cripple I've met who…shit. (66)

Bro appears to be genuinely affectionate towards Girl, and her actions indicate that she shares his affection. Bro is attempting to ask her some questions, but she is unable to answer him verbally. He keeps losing track of what he intends to say, but eventually tells her a story about how he hurt his knee when he was younger:

> Well, I was just a kid, and I made a bet with some friends. I told them I could jump from our roof to the neighbor's roof. I was really sure I could. There was a nest on the other roof. We saw how the mama-bird and the papa-bird got killed. Some worker guys, who were fixing the roof—they got drunk one night and chopped them with a knife. The birds. What? Well, they chopped off their heads, just like that. Yeah, but they were so drunk, that they wanted to piss over the roof, but instead of pissing over the roof, they just pissed on those birds. And then the birds made them really sick, so they left […] and after that I got on the roof from inside the house, and I still got the abandoned baby birds. Yeah. I took them home and kept them a few days. (66-67)

This monologue can be interpreted in a few different ways; the most obvious is that the story of the birds parallels the story of Romania. Mama-bird and papa-bird, killed by “workers,” are representative of Elena and Nicolae Ceauşescu who were killed after a workers’ rebellion. The baby birds represent the people of Romania: helpless, scared, and in need of rescue. Bro features as the rescuer of the abandoned birds; perhaps he is a character with a hero complex—he sees creatures (people/Girl) in need of his help and he risks his own safety to assist, even if those creatures do not ask for his help. Recall that Girl was discovered abandoned and is unable to speak or hear, just like the baby birds. The inclusion of this kind of evocative imagery haunts the audience, confronting them with memories of the past and guiding them to imagine a new identity.

The next scene occurs a month after Bro’s monologue about the baby birds and features Andrea alone in her room hitting tennis balls against the wall. She tells the audience about what has happened in the time lapse. Andrea admits that she called the police to report Girl’s presence in their house. She justifies her actions by claiming that “it wasn’t normal” that Girl did not talk, that she was suffering from insomnia and horrible headaches brought on by the stress of having her there, and that her tennis games had suffered (69). Andrea says she intended the police to come while Mother and Father and Bro were all out, so that Mother and Father would never find out about her, but that the police arrived late. Mother and Father are very angry with Andrea, and Bro chases the policemen as they leave with Girl.

Soon Mother, Father, and Andrea are seen watching television together. The news program they are watching features “two young lovers who decided to run away for their happiness” (Bro and Girl) who received a donation of 50,000 euro in support of their true love. By capturing public support and receiving money, Bro and Girl are now both like the earlier “baby birds” who needed rescuing. Bro’s status as rescuer is changed as he becomes the beneficiary of other peoples’ kindness and philanthropy. The play demonstrates the change in Romanian society from a focus on what is good for the country as a whole to what is good for individual people.

After the program, Mother and Father express their feelings about the situation. Mother is relieved that Bro is okay. Father, on the other hand, is livid that he was given all of that money for “nothing.” His comments might suggest that he is envious of Bro, as he says, “You can’t get such a slap on the face after a life of hard work. I know him well. He would never have managed

to EARN that money. He has no talent, no personality, no wit, he's lazy, he can't make decisions! I know him!" (72). This section is interesting for a few reasons. Primarily, Father's reaction seems completely arbitrary. The ways in which he describes his son do not correspond with how Bro has been depicted up to this point. True, Bro brought home a disabled stranger and hid her from his family, and true, he ran away from home when she was taken from him, but there has been nothing up to now that indicates he is lazy (he was employed at McDonald's), has no wit (he attempted to rescue the baby birds), or that he cannot make decisions (he clearly made the decision that Girl was more important than his family). Bearing this in mind, the play suggests Father is having trouble reconciling that he, a man who considers himself a hard worker, will never have as much money as his son, who worked a minimum wage job and was rewarded for leaving his family. Mother attempts to mitigate Father's reaction, but ultimately gets pulled into his heightened emotions and yells at him, "JUST THANK GOD HE'S OKAY AND SHUT UP!" (72). Both Father and Mother appear upset about these recent events involving Bro, but are handling the stress differently. These disparate reactions to the stress on the family, and the ways in which Mother and Father view their son's actions are emblematic of the various ways the older generation in Romania may react to the choices made by the younger generation.

The next time we see Bro he is sitting in an Office of Psychiatry next to a newly introduced character, Rock Star. The two strike up a conversation about "occidental" rules.[41] Both Bro and Rock Star spend a few moments bemoaning rules they perceive are being imposed by the West, like no smoking inside a building. They equate the doctor they are waiting to see with the West and claim that the doctor/West does not respect their time as their scheduled appointments have not been honored. The conversation topic changes to the women in their lives; less like a discussion, the information shared is as though they are talking to themselves. We learn that "Girl" has left Romania to go to the US, having received a grant for people with "deficiencies" and that Bro misses Mother (73-74).

By having Girl move to the United States, the play suggests a few things: first, that people with disabilities have a difficult time getting the assistance they need in Romania and may be better off leaving the country; second, that disabilities are generally misunderstood in Romania (as evidenced by the ways in which Bro refers to Girl's disability as a "deficiency" or

[41] Another way of saying "Western."

her as a "cripple"); and third, that the Romanian people see the United States as a place of escape from the difficulties that make up their daily lives.

Bro makes good on his earlier promise to get in touch with Mother; he takes Rock Star to his family's apartment where Mother recognizes him as a singer from a rock band. Rock Star is impressed that Mother knows him and his music, and the two strike-up a conversation that does not include Bro. Rock Star's speech reflects his role as representative of Western culture (frequent use of "man" and "whatever"). Rock Star has an almost immediate effect on Mother. She begins listening to music that he recommends, stops doing the things she used to do (like vacuuming and ordering pizza), and goes out all night. In the face of this new distraction Mother abandons traditions, family ties, and becomes infatuated with everything Rock Star likes. Father becomes increasingly frustrated by Mother's behavior, and chooses to focus on his business. Father's business ventures are never fully revealed, but the way he talks it sounds as though his work is unethical, and involves selling people dreams. He has "investors" who pop up quickly, and he is always talking about earning money fast. Father is pursuing a capitalist mode of living and, like Mother, is seduced by elements of Western culture. The older generation is portrayed as easily distracted by Western culture, despite earlier assertions to the contrary.

Andrea reacts differently to Mother's absence. She, in effect, removes herself from social interactions, claiming, "I don't feel like it. I have nothing fancy to wear" (77). Andrea has stopped playing tennis and is demonstrating tendencies of someone who is emotionally unstable. For example, in an interaction with "Woman," Father's boss who spent the night, she says:

> I have mental problems [and] can't get any sleep because of that. I can't get any sleep and I have an incredible sense of hearing. I would like to know what is going on with my father. Why does he do the things he does, why didn't my mother sleep at home, why are you here? You fucked all night long. I told you I have an incredible sense of hearing. (78-79)

Andrea's outburst is atypical of the behavior she has displayed up to this point, and points to her decline. Now that Mother and Father have adopted a Western perspective and have become more Western than she is, Andrea lashes out at anyone outside her family who contributes to the conflicts that have arisen as a result of their conversion. Andrea represents a different Romanian perspective: while she acknowledges that some change is healthy, she resists sweeping change.

She is willing to criticize those she considers responsible for implementing (or attempting to implement) new rules or systems without consulting others first.

Following Andrea's outburst and the revelation that Father is having an affair, we move forward a few weeks and observe Bro and Rock Star in a bar. Bro is so intoxicated he is practically passed out on the table, and Rock Star is teasing him. It may be that the play is suggesting that with Girl's departure for the US, Bro has become more vulnerable to the influences of Rock Star. After a few moments, Bro tries to defend himself but falls out of his seat and lands under the table. At first, Rock Star does not understand what has happened and thinks that Bro is playing with him. Eventually, he realizes that Bro is not moving and begins to panic. Again, the play may be pointing at the possibility that an influence from the West has resulted in Bro's demise. Early the next morning Rock Star appears at the family apartment with a large box. Andrea is not happy that Rock Star is there and leaves the hallway for her room, slamming the door behind her. Mother introduces Rock Star to Father, who appears stymied by Rock Star's presence. Rock Star asks Mother to keep a box of his belongings at the family house for a few days and then leaves. During Rock Star's brief visit his relationship with Mother becomes clearer. She seems uncomfortable being in the presence of both Rock Star and her family. After Rock Star leaves Mother feels the need to justify his visit with Father, who just stares at her quizzically. The family continues its slow unraveling as the different generations deal with their respective issues in very different ways.

We next see Bro inside the large cardboard box Rock Star dropped off at the apartment. He delivers a monologue in which he informs us (and seemingly himself) that the night he was with Rock Star his liver exploded as a result of too much alcohol, and he died. Rock Star stuffed his body in the box and delivered him to the family so that he would not have to deal with the situation. With Bro's death the family is tipped even further off-kilter; they are uncertain how to move forward and even somewhat unwilling to speak about what happened.

Frustrated by Bro's disappearance and the way her family is responding to it, Andrea acts out by confronting Mother. She accuses Mother of not loving her any more:

> ANDREA. You don't care about me anymore.
>
> MOTHER. Get out.
>
> ANDREA. You used to love me. You used to come to all my games. Now you don't care about me anymore. You don't even care if I have mental

problems.

MOTHER: Have a little patience. We'll talk about this later. Don't think I don't love you anymore. I can't stop loving you, you are my little girl, right? (83)

In this depiction Andrea and Mother are representative of the relationship between Romanian youth and the older generation. The youth of Romania are somewhat needy, asking the older generation to pay attention to them, while the older generation admonishes them to "be patient" and promises they will always be loved and cared for. This portion of the text haunts the Romanian audience, reminding them that government officials made promises following the fall of communism that they would take care of the people. Andrea's words may reflect the way many in Romania felt about the West following the fall of communism—immediately after the 1989 Revolution, offers of assistance were made by Western governments but there was little follow through.

The distance between Mother and Andrea does not go unnoticed by Bro, whose next two monologues reveal how he perceives his family's situation. Bro asserts that his death has enabled him to enter into people's bodies and influence them. He claims that the "host" cannot feel his presence yet, but that he is getting stronger and will soon be able to control other people. He rips into his parents and the choices they have made saying, "I don't give a shit if you make up or you don't, but do you want to know where I am? Well, surprise!!! And your life full of shit will slowly sink, with all your successes, and your businesses, and your cheap movies, because here I am! I am with you all the time!!" (85). The "you" to whom he refers in the first sentence is Mother and Father; the implication is that no matter what Mother or Father do, they are doomed to failure. Bro tells them directly that he is there with them, weighing them down. Bro, the good son who rescued Girl, was subsequently killed when partying with Rock Star. Bro introduced Rock Star to the family, and Rock Star in turn introduced Western culture to the family. The family was splintered as a result of Rock Star's influence and Bro claims that same influence will now weigh them down until they sink. These passages serve as both literal and theoretical hauntings—Bro is dead and addressing his family as a ghost, and Western culture has fractured the family.

The next scene features Mother, Father, and Andrea eating dinner. Father and Mother argue about the food on the table—Father is angry that Mother bought the food rather than

making it herself, Mother retorts that he can make his own food if he is unhappy about it. This is an interesting scene because of its duality. On one hand, it can clearly be read as a typical exchange between working parents frustrated with one another. On the other hand, this scene can be read as a battle over which approach is "better" for Romania in terms of providing for the people. Is it Father's approach, which continues to be heavily influenced by communism (make it yourself), or Mother's approach, which has become increasingly more influenced by Western ideals (go out and buy what is convenient)? While Mother and Father argue, Andrea attempts to move the box (containing Bro) out of the kitchen because she keeps bumping into it. The symbolism here seems apparent: Bro, who may serve as a reminder of the family's past, is getting in the way. The only comment Mother makes in relation to the box is, "Somebody open that window. It smells strange. Something stinks" (88). Her disinterest in the past is blatant as she just dismisses the smell without going to investigate what is generating it. Mother, representative of the older generation of Romanians, is happy to complain but unwilling to enact any real change, such as finding the source of the smell and dealing with it.

The next scene introduces a new character. According to Ion's notes, "Andreea Marin" is:

> "a local goddess" in Romania [she] has her own show, called *Surprise, Surprise*. She looks very fake and has a fake smile. In her show, she invites people who have problems and surprises them by bringing their lost relatives onto the program, or inviting their favourite artist, or supporting them with sudden gifts and money. Of course, everything seems to be normal with this kind of show, until you realize that Andreea Marin is more interested in people's tears and exposed sufferings and needs than in their protection. But still, Andreea Marin is considered (and truly considers herself) "an angel," which she certainly is not. (100)

Marin appears in the box with Bro and attempts to interview him for her television show. As Ion indicated in the quote above, Marin asks Bro questions that are less about helping Bro and more about evoking emotion, "So you really WOULD like to hug them one more time, wouldn't you?" (89). Ion's use of Marin in the play, and her subsequent note about Marin to the reader, indicates her disdain for those people who are only interested in the ways Romania suffers and not in the ways Romania is able to overcome the issues of the past.

For the first time, Andrea and Rock Star appear in a scene alone. Rock Star arrives at the apartment under the auspices that he is looking for Bro. Andrea invites him in to watch Mother and Father appear on a reality television show called "Please, Forgive Me." Andrea intimates that this is not the first time they have been on the show, and she expresses her humiliation that they are dredging up family business for everyone in Romania to see. The show ends, and Andrea quickly changes the subject away from her parents by asking Rock Star if she can write some songs for him and his band. She tells him that she is not angry with him "about that thing with my mom," to which he replies, "You're not? Man, I guess you really are a nice girl. I didn't mean to hurt you" (92). Andrea begins to ask Rock Star what is in the box he brought over when Mother and Father come home. Andrea is not happy to see her parents home so soon, and Mother is not happy to see Andrea and Rock Star sharing some time alone. Father and Mother argue over whether Andrea should be allowed to spend time with Rock Star and what exactly transpired between Mother and Rock Star. In the midst of a huge, physical battle, Rock Star screams out that he killed Bro. The reactions among the family members vary, but ultimately they all agree to forgive Rock Star and one another. Rock Star is invited to join the family by marrying Andrea. After everyone agrees that Andrea and Rock Star will marry, Andreea Marin shows up at the apartment again. She attempts to get the family to reveal their pain over the loss of Bro:

> ANDREEA MARIN. Do you want to sit with me on the "Surprise, Surprise" couch? Sit with me and let me ask you a question: how painful is the loss of your son for you?
>
> MOTHER. Excuse me, I have to wash the dishes.
>
> ANDREEA MARIN. We, the "Surprise, Surprise" team, want to prove the impossible. To beam a ray of hope into these people's hearts. I know you miss him a lot.
>
> FATHER. We'll get over it. We have to look to the future, not the past…
>
> MOTHER. Yes, we have to focus on the good things that can happen to us. (98)

From this section, it appears as though Mother and Father have come together to focus on the future, rather than bemoan the loss of the glorious past. The marriage of Andrea/Rebellious Youth and Rock Star/Western influence, with the blessing of Mother and Father/Older, more

complacent generation, seems to be a positive step for the people of Romania. Mother delivers a monologue at the end of the play, saying:

> I think I can finally face the future and smile! I am a mother. I tried to commit suicide a couple of times, once with a rope and twice with a razor. I had a maternal shock in a severe state caused by my son's death, but I managed to get over it. I always got over my problems, because when you have problems, you have to focus only on the good things that happen to you…For example, now, when I close my eyes, all I can see is my little girl in a beautiful wedding dress. That's what makes me breathe again. (100)

The monologue appears to be ironic—there is no evidence in the text that Mother attempted suicide or grieved Bro's death for any time longer than a few moments. Mother, the older generation, is depicted as utterly in denial, which we have seen before. She claims to focus on the "good," which is a fantasy, because Andrea does not embody that image. The text reinforces that no one in Romania is without fault—the older generation refuses to acknowledge the problems that the nation faces and find ways to fix them, and the younger generation advocates for change at the expense of learning from the past. Each generation is guilty of perpetuating the remembering/forgetting cycle that prevents them from carving out Romania's new national identity.

By examining the ways different generations of Romanians are coping (or not) with their presence in the new global community, this play keeps controversial issues,[42] some from the past and others from the present, at the forefront of the audience's mind. The family's dysfunction and ability to be easily corrupted is representative of the larger criticism that the nation suffers from these same traits. These issues are like contested sites for the Romanian people; the play pushes the audience to refocus and reframe their idea of Romania's national identity. Bogdan Georgescu, the next playwright I analyze, examines generational issues in Romania too. However, unlike Ion, Georgescu looks at a group of relative strangers rather than a family, representative of different generations and socio-economic groups, to illustrate the point that Romania is missing an opportunity to move forward by dwelling in the past.

[42] Including extramarital affairs, corruption, murder, and kidnapping.

Romania. Kiss Me!

Bogdan Georgescu, who was born and raised in Romania and continues to live there today, is one of the founders of the aforementioned tangaProject. He and Ion worked extensively with American Roberta Levitow on playwriting workshops. He considers himself "first and foremost" a director, primarily because his education is in directing. However, he believes that a real theatre artist is able to move seamlessly from role to role; everyone should contribute to the completion of the project. Georgescu clearly articulates his beliefs about the role of the playwright, saying:

> What we are trying to do through all our projects is to recover the playwright's position in the structure of the Romanian theater, which has been entirely dominated by directors for the past 60 years. Having the playwright in the rehearsal room and actively involved in the construction of the performance are rules which, if not respected, lead to our refusal to collaborate with the respective theater. The positive consequences were [sic] that there are other young artists who choose to work this way. (personal correspondence October 5, 2010)

While Georgescu is clearly more in favor of the current system for playwrights, he also acknowledges the talent of those who paved the way. In particular, he admires the work of I.L. Caragiale, saying:

> I find I. L. Caragiale the Romanian playwright with the strongest sense of theatricality and of the way he transformed his reality into theater. Then there are his sense of composition and musicality. Unfortunately, it's much too local to be translated—I mean the translation of the depicted reality, not of the language as such, even if this is problematic as well. (personal correspondence October 5, 2010)

Georgescu's *Romania. Kiss Me!* is very different stylistically from Ion's *Vitamins.* Georgescu employs a chorus of actors (The Orchestra) who collectively serve as the narrators of the play, supplying all of the sound and visual effects required. The chorus rarely speaks, but occasionally does sing. Their function is to provide the audience with information and act as the liaison between the audience and the world of the play. The other three roles represent different generations of Romanians: Vasile, a woman, is twenty; Mr. Neagoe is forty; and Miss Renata is sixty. The twenty-year gap among the characters foreshadows some of their interactions.

Romania. Kiss Me! was first produced in 2004; while Georgescu does not specify a set timeframe for the action, references in the text indicate it takes place during that same year.[43] Since Vasile is twenty, she would have been born in 1984. The Revolution was in 1989, which means that Vasile was only five at the time. She spent the majority of her life free of communist rule, which has clearly shaped her perception of Romania and the world. Mr. Neagoe, at forty, would have spent his childhood and some of his adult life living under communist rule, and Miss Renata, her entire childhood and most of her adult life under communism. The characters, excluding the Orchestra, speak and interact with one another in a way that may be described as realistic. The play appears to be intended for a diverse Romanian audience, with representation from different generations preferred.

The play takes place on an overnight train from an undisclosed location in Romania. The play positions the characters on the train with different ideas about the current situation in Romania and the possibilities for the future. The characters refer to "the West" periodically in both positive and negative terms. At the play's start we see the Orchestra prepare the tools they will use to make effects in the space (including pieces of metal, whistling, plastic containers, plastic bags, metal foil, spitting sunflower seeds) as Miss Renata enters. She is described as "full of silver jewelry" (41).[44] Upon entering she cleans the seat closest to the window and then disposes of her napkin in the overflowing trashcan. She then places a towel on the seat and sits on it after stowing her luggage under her feet (42). Train compartments in Romania are notoriously small and dirty, and getting to a compartment first in order to secure the "best" seat is something most train-goers know. After Miss Renata gets settled, Mr. Neagoe enters. He carries a briefcase close to his body as though afraid it will get dirty or be taken. He sits directly opposite Miss Renata, never letting go of his briefcase. The Orchestra's effects become: "screaming, cracking and spitting of sunflower seeds, laughter, a gypsy woman cursing, onion, lots of onion, crying, departure whistle, wheels" (42).[45] The sounds and smells described are common to parts of Romania and to train travel throughout Romania.

Vasile enters the compartment in a flurry of movement. She wears headphones and throws her bag onto the second window seat before stepping outside to finish smoking her

---

[43] References to Vasile wearing headphones, a cellular phone, etc.
[44] The Orchestra is seated onstage with the actors, taking up approximately ½ of the stage space. They are highly visible and audible for the duration.
[45] Georgescu uses the pejorative "gypsy" in his description. This term is also considered pejorative in Romania, although it is used with some frequency.

cigarette. The Orchestra sounds change to “scratching/scribbling noise, departing train noise, buzz of voices saying, ‘goodbye!,’ ‘talk to you soon!,’ ‘kisses!,’ ‘I’ll be back!,’ metal doors slamming, lockers and metal chains” (42-43). While several of the sounds performed are typical of a busy train station, the inclusion of the metal doors slamming and lockers and metal chains adds an interesting element to the performance. Audience members may not at first comprehend what they are hearing, thinking that it is just the sound of the train wheels starting to move. By reading it, however, we see exactly which sounds are used. The use of these metal objects may remind the audience of the sounds that prison doors make when slammed. The train compartment becomes like a prison for the characters and the sound effects haunt the audience with notions of being trapped, literally and figuratively.

After she finishes her cigarette, Vasile returns to the compartment and opens the window, much to Miss Renata’s dismay. Miss Renata behaves in a way that indicates she is uncomfortable; she gets up, leaves, returns, puts some alcohol-soaked cotton balls in her ears, and takes a pill of some kind before speaking. The first lines of dialogue heard in the play are Miss Renata’s “There’s a draft” (43). Despite her best efforts to get anyone to pay attention to her and her desire to have the window closed, Miss Renata goes ignored for several moments. She finally resorts to lying, telling Vasile that her phone was ringing in an effort to get her to take off her headphones and listen. Miss Renata then slams the window closed. Vasile is unmoved; she checks her phone for missed calls, laughs when she sees that there are none, and re-opens the window. The two have a silent face-off for a few moments before Miss Renata finally appeals to Mr. Neagoe for assistance. Mr. Neagoe, who is trying to sleep, merely asks them to keep their voices down. The lines between Vasile and Miss Renata have been drawn—the older, fussy woman versus the younger, seemingly strong-willed woman.

Miss Renata’s next tactic to get what she wants is to spray the compartment with air freshener. She may think that the overwhelming smell will force Vasile to leave and she will then be able to close the window, or that Vasile will so appreciate her gesture to make the compartment smell better that she will return the favor by closing the window. Unfortunately, Miss Renata’s plan is unsuccessful. Vasile launches a mini-tirade against Miss Renata saying, “Now you’ve fucked it all up. You know what? I have a sit [sic] here, too. And now I can’t stay here because of your shitty deodorant. Where should I go now? There are no empty seats in this train, no place for me to go. Now I’m going to have to hold the window open the entire night”

(44). Clearly this was not the response that Miss Renata was hoping for. Rather than ingratiate herself with Vasile, she alienates her even further. To make matters worse, it begins to rain, and the rain comes in through the open window. Miss Renata's composure deteriorates as the situation worsens—she responds like a prisoner in a cage as she begins begins cursing and insulting her country. Vasile closes the window as the members of the orchestra begin singing the Romanian Communist national anthem ("There are only three colors I know in the world: red, yellow and blue")(45).[46]

Ending the scene to the strains of the Romanian Communist national anthem as the oldest person (and the one who spent the most time under a communist regime) rails against the nation is particularly interesting. The play upsets assumptions about the older generation's inability to change by having the oldest person be the most vocal about her dissatisfaction about her country. However, her complaint is weakened by its own vagueness. Miss Renata never says what it is she is so unhappy about—she merely bemoans, "My rotten luck. I was born in Romania" (45). The inclusion of the communist anthem is an obvious example of haunting. Despite the fact that communism fell in Romania more than twenty years ago, more than likely most Romanians in the audience would recognize the song. By incorporating a song from a period of time that was so difficult for Romania, the play prompts the audience to relive that time, to confront their memories (or assumptions, as in the case of those who were not yet born), and make choices about the future.

The next scene begins with Miss Renata talking to herself and Vasile staring out the window listening to music. Mr. Neagoe attempts to strike up a conversation with Miss Renata by asking her to repeat something he heard her say earlier. She gets very animated, stands up, and begins to talk about her trips abroad. She tells him she has left Romania six times in the last year, and before each trip "all this shit happens to me" (46). She continues that this is her last trip out of the country because she has no intention of returning to Romania again. Mr. Neagoe laughs at her and re-opens the window. This time Vasile comes to Miss Renata's defense, telling Mr. Neagoe to close the window because "she can't take it anymore" (46). Mr. Neagoe is unmoved, preferring instead to talk about his love for Romania:

> I wouldn't trade Romania for anything in the whole world. And yes, I love all those things that Westerners hate so much. Yes, I spit sunflower seeds,

[46] These are the colors of the Romanian flag.

> and yes, I love to slaughter my own Christmas pig, and yes, I prefer to solve my own problems in my own way and avoid the nosey fucking caring community. It is very sad you can't live in Romania. (46)

Up to this point, Mr. Neagoe has been largely silent. His speech seems prompted by Miss Renata's earlier remarks about Romania and her desire to get out. Initially, it seems the play is attempting to challenge Western misconceptions of the Romanian people, including that people in Romania are likely spit sunflower seeds and slaughter their own food, making them too different from Westerners. Miss Renata has her chance to refute Mr. Neagoe's statements, and thereby present another perspective to be considered.

Miss Renata has a violent (and seemingly out of character) reaction to Mr. Neagoe's dismissal of her feelings. She removes an onion from her bag, smashes it with her foot, and shoves it under Mr. Neagoe's nose. She also takes out a fistful of lard, and smashes the onion and the lard into Mr. Neagoe's face. She claims that no matter what she does, she cannot wash off the smells of her country, onion and lard. Unfortunately for Miss Renata, Mr. Neagoe does not react the way she hoped: he wipes off his face and licks the onion and lard off his fingers, all the while laughing at her. Surprisingly, it is Vasile who once again comes to Miss Renata's defense, telling Mr. Neagoe, "I think you're eating shit big time…If humiliation gives you pleasure, then enjoy" (47). This moment throws a twist into the story; it sets up the friction between them by playing on the generational differences established early in the play. The old and young have made an alliance; the narrative changes course by bringing them together over more significant issues, like their feelings about being Romanian. Vasile lashes out against Mr. Neagoe again, saying "Your breath stinks. Just another sign of your Romanian charm and our excellent Romanian hygiene" (48). Miss Renata is unable to handle all of the acrimony and asks that the window be re-opened.

The next scene starts with the Orchestra "cutting onions, opening tuna cans, piss, noise and smell of the toilet, plastic bags, rhythm of plastic bottles, wheels, train whistle" (48-49). Miss Renata is in distress, unable to breathe. The Orchestra begins dancing military steps and panting, mimicking the rhythm of the train. Vasile and Mr. Neagoe are panicked, trying to figure out how to help Miss Renata. Mr. Neagoe wants to pull the alarm and stop the train, but Vasile wants to just put her on a pile of comfortable clothes. When Mr. Neagoe insists that they stop the train, she begs him, "You can't do this to me. I won't let you. If you stop this train I'm gonna

miss my flight and everything will go straight to shit. Don't stop. Please" (49). This is the first time we have heard Vasile offer any personal information. She alludes to a future that the audience is not aware of, and she forbids Mr. Neagoe from stopping the train and pleads with him simultaneously. Initially Mr. Neagoe agrees with Vasile, making reference to the risk of losing everything if they stop the train. Miss Renata implores Vasile, begging her not to let her die on the train, and Vasile and Mr. Neagoe change their minds and decide to stop the train after all. Mr. Neagoe, however, is unable to go through with the plan. He admits to Vasile:
"One hundred thousand dollars. I can't lose it. One hundred thousand. A one hundred thousand dollar contract. Airplane. I can't. I can't lose this contract. You shouldn't stay in Romania. She's already dead" (50). As with Vasile, we learn personal information about Mr. Neagoe. Vasile acquiesces and begins talking. She tells Mr. Neagoe that her name is Vasile, which is traditionally a boy's name. This confession unleashes a flood of information: she reveals to Mr. Neagoe "Just this thing with my name and it's enough to make me want to never come back. They made me a laughing stock" (51). Vasile openly criticizes the choice her parents (older generation) made in naming her, and blames them for any difficulties she had as a result of her name. Mr. Neagoe and Vasile are bonding with one another over the stress of having shared Miss Renata's death. It is apparent that they both feel some degree of guilt over not having helped her more, and are attempting to assuage their guilt by making excuses. The train stops and there is silence.

Vasile and Mr. Neagoe sit in the dark train compartment, while Miss Renata's body lies on a pile of clothes on the floor. Vasile and Mr. Neagoe debate their next steps: Mr. Neagoe is concerned that he will miss his big opportunity because he will miss his plane. Vasile agrees, and suggests that they get off the train and hitchhike to the airport. Mr. Neagoe is concerned about Miss Renata's body, and what might happen to them if her body is discovered. He gives up, saying, "The exit doors are locked. We can't get out. That's it. Everything's lost" (52). Mr. Neagoe has become progressively more apathetic and prone to indecision, while Vasile is more action-oriented and seems to be getting stronger as the play progresses: those from the generation who lived half their life under communist rule and half after its defeat are less likely to make clear decisions. Despite Mr. Neagoe's earlier defense of Romania, he has not subsequently displayed that same degree of zeal for doing anything but talking. He demonstrates the nationalist spirit that was pervasive under communism, when Romanians were expected to

participate in and vocally support Romanian traditions and customs. Vasile, who represents the Transitional generation, is less concerned with what the nation demands of her and more with what she demands of the nation. She can openly criticize and condemn Romania without fear of retribution. She not only talks about options, but takes the necessary steps to bring about change. Vasile is not willing to allow Mr. Neagoe's apathy determine her course. She jumps out of the stopped train's window and encourages him to follow. He is motivated by her action and agrees to her plan, but then gets stuck in the window. Vasile encourages him to "suck in" his stomach, but he cannot get free (53). Suddenly the train begins moving again. In a panic, Vasile runs to the door of the train to try to jump back on. Mr. Neagoe tells her to grab his hand and he will pull her into the compartment, but the train is moving faster and faster. We see Mr. Neagoe being thrown around the compartment as he attempts to help her in, and hear him screaming for her to grab his hand. We hear Vasile screaming in the background and the sounds of the train picking up speed. The next sound is the loud bump of a body falling. The Orchestra is covered in tomato sauce. Mr. Neagoe sits in the compartment and makes the sign of the cross as he grasps his briefcase. End of play.

The momentum building around Vasile's ability to make choices and take action is literally killed. The young woman, representative of the children of the Transition, who is vocal about what she wants and actively pursue her desires, dies because of her choices, specifically a desperation to get out of Romania. The middle-aged man, who appears trapped in a place of indecision, trapped between communism and capitalism, unable to act without someone holding his hand, is the only one left. In the final image he holds his briefcase tightly. We know that he is going to make a "one hundred thousand dollar deal" at the end of this train ride, and the briefcase is symbolic of that deal. The mention of money and the significance he places on it is reminiscent of the emphasis placed on material goods (capitalism). The play appears to suggest that in post-communist Romania, capitalism and privileging the needs of an individual over the needs of many win out in the end. The train's singular route represents the Romanian sense that they have to join the global community or perish. The sounds of Vasile's death, along with the gruesome addition of the tomato sauce-covered Orchestra, are unnerving. This young woman was symbolic of the potential for the future of Romania and her death is particularly horrible. While Mr. Neagoe lives, and is going to make his big deal, his heartfelt attempts to save Vasile and his inability to do so may remind Romanian audiences of promises made to them in the

recent past—that life in Romania would improve. The text haunts choices made in the past and today, and the ways in which Romanians' attempts to make life better have been largely unsuccessful (at least in Georgescu's estimation).

Bus

Like Georgescu's play, the following two plays by Cristian Panaite (*Bus, Family Ties*) examine the lengths to which people in Romania will go to get out of their country. These plays, says Panaite, were written as a way to convince American audiences of the difficulties Romanians experienced on a daily basis. Panaite has spent a good amount of his adult life in the United States. He attended college at Bennington College (Vermont), received his Master's degree from Miami University (Ohio), and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Texas-Dallas. He is no longer writing plays, choosing instead to focus on his current field, commemorative practices, public art, and performance. He wrote both *Bus* and *Family Ties* during his Master's program. They were part of:

> [a] "challenge" that my playwriting professor at Miami University had given me in my first term of graduate studies. The challenge was to focus on the structure of the narrative, and move away from the shock value unexperienced playwrights go for. At the time I was most interested in accuracy of my portrayal of reality. I wanted to show how bad things were in Romania, how much people suffer, etc. I was, I believe at the sort of victimization level [. . .] I wanted to tell big tragic Romanian stories that may move American audiences. (personal correspondence September 5, 2010)

In his own words, Panaite explains that accuracy was the objective of writing the plays. Like Ion and Georgescu, Panaite wrote the plays prior to Romania's inclusion in the EU. All three playwrights admit "things are different" now, but that not enough time has passed since joining the EU to eradicate the memories (or even experiences) of life before Romania became a member. Plays like Ion's and Georgescu's bring back the experiences Romanians had in the not-too-distant past. This recycled material is a double-edged sword: on one hand, by viewing the material Romanians are able to remember life as it was then and compare it to life now which is ostensibly "easier"; on the other hand, by viewing the material it brings back Romanians' memories of how hard life was during those years making it more difficult for them to move on.

Panaite's plays, written specifically for a Western audience, force them to confront their own assumptions about Romanian people and what it is like to live in Romania.

According to Panaite, *Bus* is a realistic contemporary drama. By having the set mimic the interior of a passenger bus headed to "the Schengen space" and incorporating sounds common to bus travel (according to the stage directions, announcements from the driver, the sound of air brakes being deployed and released), Panaite attempts to recreate this environment as closely as possible. Panaite's characters represent different generations, ranging from an infant to a man in his sixties. There are three women, two men, and one baby of indeterminate gender who all represent a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and educations.

The play opens with an announcement that the bus has arrived at its destination and that all passengers should have their passports ready for review. Most of the passengers are asleep at the play's onset. Leo, described as "an intimidating man in his late thirties," attempts to wake up Lena, an older woman. He begins gently, but when he cannot rouse her, he reacts strongly. Another passenger (Chichi) laughs at him, maintaining that Leo set himself up for ridicule by sitting next to an old person, "old bones, old brains, everything softens, eh…" (3). Leo and Chichi (a twenty-six year-old nightclub dancer from the West) go back and forth about the best way to wake up Lena. Chichi maintains that pinching her will be most successful, while Leo thinks that poking her will do the trick. We learn Lena invited Leo to sit next to her; this is her first trip out of the country. Eventually Chichi bets Leo that if she pinches her and Lena wakes up then Leo has to pay her two packs of cigarettes. Leo changes the subject and waking Lena is momentarily forgotten.

The next topic of conversation is profession. Leo and Chichi both admit that they "typically" fly to the West. Chichi, Leo suspects, is a prostitute who goes back and forth between Romania and the West selling herself. Chichi contradicts Leo, telling him that she is "an artist. A dancer" and "proud to dance in a nightclub" (5). When Chichi tells Leo he would not be able to afford to come to her club, he suggests that she thinks he is "one of those bastards begging and stealing around" (6). After the fall of communism, there was a great deal of corruption in Romania, in both the government and the general populace. During this period, the scrutiny Romanians had grown accustomed to living under shifted. Instead of being concerned that the Securitate were always watching, people were able to have some semblance of freedom to live their lives. The result was that many citizens, particularly those from the old communist party,

engaged in illegal activities without fear of repercussion. According to Gallagher, one of the ways President Iliescu diverted attention from the overarching internal problems was to emphasize potential external dangers in an effort to generate feelings of national solidarity. [47] Iliescu's diversion continued for seven years, during which time Romania suffered tremendous economic and sociological strain. His predecessor, Emil Constantinescu had refused to ignore what was happening in the country, choosing instead to emphasize "the moral danger and subversion of democratic values posed by corruption" (109). Thus, when Leo accuses Chichi of thinking he is "less than," the play informs the audience of the uneasiness Romanians felt during this time—that despite the nation's escape from the reign of terror under Ceaușescu, life in Romania was not getting better and the divide among the classes was as big as it had ever been. Romanians who promised positive growth and change following communism did not deliver. For some in Romania, reminders of the Transition may be as painful as reminders of communism.

Despite his frustration about the kind of man Chichi thinks he is, he continues conversing with her. Chichi tells Leo that she needs to use the bathroom, but he reminds her that the driver made an announcement that no one could use the bathroom until further notice. Chichi disregards the announcement, but cannot get out of her seat to use the bathroom because the young man next to her (Vali) is asleep and will not wake up. She is now in the same situation she ridiculed Leo for earlier with a sound asleep seatmate preventing her from moving. The same teasing between Leo and Chichi ensues when Chichi says Vali asked her to sit next to him, as it is his first trip to the West. This is the same reason Leo gave Chichi earlier when she told him he should not have sat next to Lena, so there is some good-natured back and forth between them. Leo tells Chichi to poke Vali; she replies that he should pinch Lena and so on. Both Leo and Chichi have urgent needs for getting up—she to use the bathroom and he to smoke, and their needs keep getting stronger with each passing moment. On the count of three, they pinch and poke both Lena and Vali, who instantly wake up. At the same time, we hear the driver repeat his announcement that until the bus has gone through security there will be no smoking and no using the bathroom. They are able to take care of one need (waking up their seatmates), but their other needs (smoke, bathroom) go unmet. As Panaite indicated, his aim was to show Americans the "real" situation in Romania. Here he depicts a group of people limited by rules and now seeking

[47] Iliescu replaced Ceauşescu, serving from 1989 to 1996. He was replaced by Constantinescu.

better lives. Their uncertainty about whether or not the West can provide something better will soon be evident.

Upon waking, Vali and Lena want to socialize with Leo and Chichi. Lena invites everyone to partake of the food she packed, including sandwiches and cake. Lena sets herself up as the mother figure of the group, inviting Leo to refer to her by her first name, but requesting that Vali, who is much younger, call her Mrs. Lena. She attempts to rally the group with her enthusiasm about the West:

> LENA. There's no use to worry…what for?
>
> LEO. That's right.
>
> LENA. I mean life in the West is supposed to be better, right?
>
> CHICHI. Right!
>
> LENA. I mean, life back home should worry us. Working in a factory like I did for thirty years should worry me, right?
>
> LEO. Right!
>
> LENA. But in the West everything is supposed to be perfect. Am I not right?
>
> CHICHI/LEO: Well… (11)

While everyone appears to agree that life in the West is "supposed to be better," Leo and Chichi are not as enthusiastic about Lena's assertion that life there is perfect.

The text now positions each of the characters firmly in their particular generation: Lena, the oldest, lived under communism the longest and has specific ideas about rules and regulations. Leo, the next oldest, is less focused on rules, but still understands that certain policies must be followed. Chichi, a mere ten years younger than Leo, was a very young child when communism fell. She lived a majority of her life without the same policies and procedures that Leo and Lena can recall. She is more happy-go-lucky and accustomed to doing what she wants to do. Finally, Vali, born about a decade after communism ended, never dealt with that structure on a daily basis. He is accustomed to doing whatever he wants and living a fairly carefree life. The roles are further solidified in the next exchange

> LENA. Well, should we go and pee, miss…
>
> CHICHI. It's Chichi—and no, we can't go and pee because of the regulations.

LENA. Regulations?

LEO. Safety measures, Lena. Women peeing at the border are considered potential terrorists.

LENA. But that's outrageous. I am no terrorist. Well, what do they expect us to do? Sit here until we explode?

CHICHI. That's right. (11-12)

The group sits uncomfortably for the next few moments, waiting for the chance to use the bathroom or to smoke. An announcement is made that they need to have their documents ready for review and that "any goods that exceed the custom policy will be confiscated" (13). This part of the announcement draws a strong reaction—each person in the group worries that they have more than the allowable number of goods and they fear what will happen. Almost simultaneously they realize that they can use one another to spread out what they have to avoid suspicion at border control. The following moments, depicted completely seriously, may come across as quite funny. At first glance, the scene takes on farcical characteristics, with characters frantically attempting to negotiate with one another. However, upon further reflection the frenetic exchange seems to underscore the fierce importance these characters place on getting across the border, highlighting the generational differences among the characters, with the older characters seemingly more concerned about appearances and the younger generations more concerned about possessions. In addition, it is possible to see the ways the text emphasizes a concern with poverty influenced by communism, during which there was a scarcity of goods.[48]

Initially, Lena is afraid that she will be discovered carrying in items that are not hers. For example, Leo asks her to carry in one of his cartons of cigarettes, as only one per person is permitted. Lena does not smoke, and she worries that she will be asked about the cigarettes. The other three try to convince her it will be okay, telling her that she will not be questioned, and that she looks like "such a respectable woman" (14). Lena is not completely convinced, especially since she is already taking in 5 kg. of ham (her son's favorite). She thinks if she adds a carton of cigarettes and a bottle of vodka (from Vali) it will appear as though she is doing something deceitful. Again, Lena is the most concerned with the rules and the ramifications of disregarding them. Since Lena has ham, the group debates how they can redistribute the goods among

[48] Boia's *Romania* discusses Ceauşescu's "rationing" of goods, particularly during the latter part of his reign, at length (140-144).

themselves. Leo proposes that Chichi take some of the ham, but she refuses because she is a vegetarian. This leads to an argument, because she will not have to eat the ham, just carry it in. Vali claims he cannot take the ham because he is a poor student. What would a poor student be doing with a carton of cigarettes, a bottle of vodka, and a piece of ham? Ultimately Chichi agrees to take the ham, but then wants to know who will take her panties.

After some time, Leo describes the breakdown of goods: "I have cigarettes and panties, Lena ham and panties, Vali cigarettes, vodka, and panties, and Chichi ham, vodka, and cigarettes" (17). At first everyone agrees to this arrangement, but then they begin to panic. Chichi, an artist, worries that she has too many items considering her small yearly income. She asks Leo to take the vodka, but he replies, "I can't. I am a worker under a contract. Can't look alcoholic." (18) Vali worries he will seem perverted because he has panties and cigarettes and vodka, and Lena gets fed up and asks for her ham back. The certainty with which the characters believe the guards will know about their professional status or income is indicative of the years of surveillance and spying under Ceaușescu and how difficult it is to move on from that fear. The plan falls apart and everyone begins demanding his or her own items. Leo tries to calm everyone down and get things reorganized. For the first time, the awake passengers notice the two sleeping passengers. Chichi notices the sleeping baby first, calling him beautiful. Leo then remarks on how the baby and his mother look like "two angels" (18). He goes on, "Maybe they can help…I'm just saying. The custom officers don't care too much about young women with children…do they…I mean what are the chances. Just leave a bottle of vodka, some panties, some ham and cigarettes by the child and we are all settled" (18). This "mini society" is unable to work together or trust one another, which may also signal the ways Panaite perceives the larger (Romanian) society.

The sequence suggests the continued existence of desperation to survive in Romania, and that sometimes that desperation leads to finding creative ways to work within certain structures. Leo's fellow passengers are, at first, reluctant to follow his plan. However, it does not take long for him to convince them that his plan could work and that they should give it a try. Lena and Chichi carry the goods over to the chair next to the sleeping woman, while Vali and Leo prepare to wake her. The play ends with the suggestion to poke and pinch her. These characters, who have spent the better part of the play devising ways to get off the bus with all of their stuff without scrutiny by the authorities, have once again changed direction. They are willing to leave

these items with a woman they have never met in order to avoid suspicion. The importance they invested in their items seems to have been replaced by the desire to avoid trouble. The anxiety over crossing borders and the rules and regulations involved in crossing is universal—what differs is how the generations deal with that anxiety. Panaite's goal to bring to our consciousness the reality of life in Romania (even after communism) appears to be realized through the text, as it lays out for the audience the various ways he proposes Romanians are negotiating the remembering/forgetting cycle.

Family Ties

The second of Panaite's short plays, *Family Ties, Or Bye, Bye New York,* also addresses for a Western audience the reality of life in Romania. Again, the text uses generational differences to demonstrate Panaite's earlier stated point, focusing this time on a single family. Like *Bus,* the play is a contemporary drama. Panaite's stage directions describing the set, the interior of an embassy in Romania, are very specific and give clear visual cues about life in Romania:

> A few rows of chairs, a desk on one side for completing any documents. On the opposite side, at an angle, the booth of the immigration officer. The front of the booth is bullet-proof dark glass, so the audience cannot see who is on the other side. Four, five, six or even seven video cameras (much bigger than the real ones) are watching everything, including the audience. A large round clock central upstage—suspended. The flag of the USA can be seen in a corner, protected by bullet-proof glass. The Romanian flag stands on the opposite side, eaten by moths. Under the clock, upstage, a heavy wooden door that marks the passage to the immigration officer's booth. When opened, a powerful light hits the audience. (2)

The American flag is clearly privileged, placed behind glass and in pristine condition, while the Romanian flag is left out in the open to be eaten by moths. Placing larger-than-life video cameras all over the stage suggests that Romanians are constantly being watched and scrutinized. At the same time, the audience cannot see who (if anyone) is seated in the booth, evoking uneasiness. For an American audience, this scene might call to mind an interrogation room in a police station, where (at least on television) a suspect may be questioned in a room with a large one-way mirror. There is no way of knowing who is watching and listening to what happens in the

interrogation room. The bright light that comes from behind the heavy wooden door may evoke comparisons to heaven—if one is successful enough to get in to see an immigration officer, the suggestion is that s/he are going to "the promised land." All of this information is given to the audience before the first word of dialogue is even spoken, providing a clear indication of life in Romania, and how much value is placed on getting out. While Panaite indicated his intention was to educate an American audience, the play would likely speak to a Romanian audience too.[49] Haunted by the set design and the memories of visiting the embassy themselves may result in negative responses. It may also serve to reinforce the choice Romanian audience members made to leave.

Two men enter the space; one in his mid twenties, the other in his early eighties. The younger man is carefully trying to arrange a folder full of papers. The older man begins talking to the younger man about his pigeons and how he cannot wait to go home and feed them. The younger man, who appears to be very impatient, tells the older man to be quiet so that he can think. The younger man goes over a list of documents he needs, "Passport, letter of invitation, job description…" (2). The older man gets upset with the younger man, accusing him of forgetting the seeds he needs to feed the birds. He then remarks that he is excited to go to Australia.[50] The younger man gets frustrated and tells him that they are not going to Australia, but the older man is not convinced. He says he received an invitation from the International Raising Doves Association and that he is there with his passport in order to get permission to go. The two argue back and forth for a few moments and then the younger man appears to be concerned that the older man is going to get him into trouble. He tells him, "Christ! Just sit down! Sit down and don't do anything stupid. We could have gotten arrested a minute ago" (3). We learn that the older man set off the metal detector because he has a metal plate in his hip and some silver teeth and that the men at the entrance were suspicious because he set off the detector. The Old Man is clearly unhappy about what transpired:

> OLD MAN. Whatever. What can I do if I have some silver in my teeth and a metal piece in my hipbone. What did they think—that I was going to blow up this place?

---

[49] According to Panaite, as of October 2010 the play had not been produced in Romania.
[50] The Old Man continues to confuse America and Australia for the duration of the play.

YOUNG MAN. Shh! Keep quiet. You'll get us shot. Yes, that's what they thought.

OLD MAN. Well next time, if the gatekeeper pisses me off I'll shove my steel hipbone up his…(4)

This exchange switches the established dynamic between the generations. As we've seen in the other plays addressed in this chapter, the older generation are generally more concerned about keeping quiet and not making anyone angry (having grown up under communism) and the younger generation are generally more vocal about their dissatisfaction. Instead, Young Man in this play is more concerned about keeping up appearances (not getting shot) and Old Man focused on getting his way (fighting back if someone makes him angry).

The Old Man launches into a speech about not being able to move his bowels at home, saying he will do it at the embassy because the Australians would not mind. The Young Man corrects him and sends him on his way to the bathroom. While he is gone, another man enters the scene. Middle Aged Man and Young Man recognize one another immediately, both surprised to see the other. Their relationship becomes evident when Young Man refers to "Mom" and how she thought Middle Aged Man had found another woman. Middle Aged Man does not deny that he is having an affair, but when Young Man admits he thought Middle Aged Man was off drunk somewhere, Middle Aged Man claims to have quit drinking

MIDDLE AGED MAN. I did, honest to God. A few months ago, I bumped into a couple of Mormons, or maybe they were the Christ lovers of sixth or seventh day, I don't really remember.

YOUNG MAN. Jesus!

MIDDLE AGED MAN. Exactly. How did you know? They convinced me that Jesus loves me and that he is waiting for someone like me. I couldn't really understand them at first, but they took me to their church, taught me English every Friday and Saturday, and in a couple of weeks I couldn't even stare at the bottle…any bottle. (6)

Middle Aged Man tries to explain to Young Man why he has been absent for some time. As he tries to gain ground with his son, Middle Aged Man claims he is trying to "get some things straight. Fix something" but Young Man calls him on this, telling him he cannot fix things at home and try to move across the ocean at the same time (7). The relationship between Middle

Aged Man and Young Man seems backwards, with Middle Aged Man more like the son than the father. In their conversations, Young Man appears more mature and more reasonable, while Middle Aged Man is lacking confidence and in need of affirmation.

Middle Aged Man tells Young Man the story of his attempt to get a visa, and how he was rejected. He says he explained to the woman immigration officer that Jesus wants him to work on American land and build a new life, but she was unconvinced. She asked him if he had any family ties, he said no, and she handed him back his papers and wished him a nice day (8). He is very angry that he was not granted a visa and cannot understand the reason for the refusal. Young Man picks up on the phrase "family ties" used by Middle Aged Man. He asks him about it, and Middle Aged Man says that he told the woman that he has no family ties because Young Man and his mother no longer "belong" to him. Young Man agrees, and begins frantically looking through his own documents. Young Man wants to know what else they asked Middle Aged Man who says he does not remember. Instead he just says, "Bye, bye New York!" implying that he has given up on his dream of moving to America.

Immediately following this discussion, Old Man emerges from the bathroom. Middle Aged Man refers to him as "Dad," but Old Man does not recognize him. Young Man explains to his father that Old Man has dementia that has been compounded by a lack of communication with Middle Aged Man. Middle Aged Man has trouble accepting Old Man's condition, but Young Man does not have time to elaborate because his number is called. He leaves the waiting room repeating to himself "family ties" (11). Old Man and Middle Aged Man are left in the waiting room and attempt to communicate. Middle Aged Man asks Old Man a series of questions about his life, but Old Man answers him as though he is a complete stranger. A few minutes into the conversation, Middle Aged Man attempts to make amends with his father:

> MIDDLE AGED MAN. I am sorry.
>
> OLD MAN. What for? We're two strangers.
>
> MIDDLE AGED MAN. I am sorry for letting you down. I am sorry for not trying harder, for not offering my son what he truly deserved. And I am sorry for forgetting about you.
>
> OLD MAN. Forgetting about me? Who do you think you're talking to?
>
> MIDDLE AGED MAN. My father!
>
> OLD MAN. Well, if it makes you feel better.

MIDDLE AGED MAN. It does.

OLD MAN. If I had a son, which I don't…I would tell him that I feel bad for him. I feel bad for how weak he grew…and I would tell him not to worry about my bones.

MIDDLE AGED MAN. I see.

The generational differences become even more clear as the conversation unfolds—Old Man criticizes how "weak" his son has been and Middle Aged Man attempts to atone for his actions (or inactions). The play does not clarify whether the Old Man is lucid during this exchange. If so, he refuses Middle Aged Man's apology and simultaneously insults him. If he is not lucid, and is in fact just talking about what he would do if he had a son, the tone of the conversation is drastically different. Through this section, the play suggests that these male family members represent certain factions of Romanian society—those who cannot let go of the past (Old Man) and those who see the mistakes they made in the past and are attempting to correct them (Middle Aged Man).

Young Man returns to the waiting room, clearly frustrated. He has not been granted a visa because of "Not enough family ties. Not enough education. Not enough money. Not good enough to cross the ocean" (14). He is concerned because he owes someone a lot of money and was hoping to leave for America to avoid having to pay up. Middle Aged Man commiserates with Young Man, finally asking him to join him for a beer. Considering that Middle Aged Man just announced that he was sober, Young Man is surprised by the invitation. Middle Aged Man concedes, "As you said, I am too weak. Come, we'll talk. We'll find a solution" (16). Young Man agrees to accompany him and asks Old Man to come too. Old Man says he will wait for his number to be called and says goodbye to his son (referring to him as "stranger") and grandson.

Old Man waits a few beats and then his number is called. He is invited into the blinding light, and according to the stage directions, the voice of the Immigration Officer is modulated to sound like God. When asked the purpose of his visit to the United States, Old Man tells the officer that he "wants to bring a fellow of mine home" (17). Throughout the play, Old Man has been talking about his pigeons, in particular one beautiful pigeon that was his favorite. He recalls for Middle Aged Man the day he could not find the pigeon and went looking for him, only to find him crushed on the street. He follows this story by saying to himself, "One day I will fly, cross the ocean, and see him again…in all his beauty…" (14). The play implies that Old Man

believes he is going to see the pigeon in "the promised land," which is the United States. When asked about his "family ties" Old Man mentions "A strong devoted son and a glorious successful grandson" (18). As the previous scene indicated that Old Man had no recollection of a son, hearing him describe his son in this fashion is surprising. It may be that the this section of the play is merely a device to suggest a image of utopia and a perfect family, to garner the officer's sympathy and get his visa. Ultimately Old Man is granted a visa, and told to return with his passport later that day. He tells the officer he is on his way to America to "make his name known" (18). Unlike his son and grandson, who want to leave Romania to escape their responsibilities at home (making things right with their family or repaying a debt), Old Man wants to leave to find his lost pigeon. The play suggests Old Man is simpleminded, focused on his bird. The bird that used to fly free and return back to him may represent a dream for Romanian youth—that they will fly away but always return home.

Each of these playwrights uses generational issues to frame their plays' messages. In each play, the generations represent different historical perspectives in Romania, usually broken down into three categories: during communism, immediately after communism (Transition), and now (membership in the EU). Ion combines elements of satire and tragedy. Her play demonstrates how she thinks things "should be," reinforcing for Romanian audiences the need to break out of the cycle of looking backwards in order to move forward. Georgescu attempts to illustrate the aspirations of the "new Romania" and what prevents these goals from being realized. These texts provide the hauntings that encourage Romanian audiences to move on and recognize the possibilities that exist for them in the global community. Panaite's two plays, written for non-Romanian audiences, focus on the relationships among the characters and the information they share. He is straightforward in his observations of both Romania and the West; his aim is simply to show things as he understands them to be in Romania and to propel the West to a clearer understanding of that life. In order to convey this aim, Panaite uses fears spurred by past events and dreams influenced by present circumstances.

These generational distinctions are a part of the struggle Romanians must confront when dealing with issues of national identity. The playwrights examined in this chapter recycle issues that are confronted by different generations, often metaphorically haunting their audience, but sometimes literally haunting them too. These playwrights shed light on problems that may be holding Romania back from full entry into the global community. Ion, Georgescu, and Panaite

attempt to enter into a dialogue with their audiences about Romania's identity—by framing their conversation with material that is familiar to the audience, like generational issues, the playwrights ask the audience to contribute as well. In particular the texts draw attention to the remembering/forgetting cycle that they depict. By highlighting the ways in which these Romanian characters navigate this cycle, the plays allow the dialogue between playwright and audience, and among audience members, to continue.

CHAPTER FOUR

DUELING INFLUENCES

> The world that Ms. Stanescu evokes in her dramatic writing is wonderfully absurd, profound, human, and hilarious all at the same time; she writes with awe-inspiring style, wit, and poetry in her adopted language—English—and delves into a host of complex issues as diverse as homelessness, crime, terrorism, and ultimately love, healing, and recovery. (Eisner, introduction to *Waxing West* 171)

Having spent some time discussing the history of theatre and playwriting in Romania and then analyzing the work of three Romanian playwrights who use generational differences to depict their notions of how Romania is currently perceived and how it can move forward, I will now focus on Romanian-born, America-transplanted playwright Saviana Stanescu. Stanescu's work reflects disparate influences on her life—growing up under communism but relocating to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar in 2001. As Eisner mentions above, she does not shy away from complex issues; each of her plays addresses relationships: with other people, with countries and cities, and with the self. I will address how Stanescu combines myth and history from both Romania and the United States to tell her stories, and how these dueling influences combine to demonstrate Stanescu's ideas about moving forward. Stanescu appears to advocate acknowledging past experiences and memories, but not at the expense of the present and the future. She encourages the audience to learn from the past, but be open to what the future holds, especially as the global community grows. Stanescu's historiography aims at haunting both Romanian and American audiences by combining components from each nation.

I will use three of Stanescu's plays: *Aurolac Blues, Waxing West,* and *Lenin's Shoe,* each of which examines the notion of the "ideal America." Stanescu's "America Plays" (*Waxing West* and *Lenin's Shoe)* investigate Western stereotypes and misconceptions about Romania/Romanians, while simultaneously complicating the "American Dream" from the perspective of a Romanian coming to America and Americans living in New York. By addressing these stereotypes and misconceptions, the text attempts to refocus our understanding of national identity.

Stanescu's writings commonly dissect and complicate the themes of stereotype and perception, both from a Western perspective and an Eastern European perspective. As a woman born in Bucharest, Romania, who considers herself "reborn" in New York City during the summer of 2001, Stanescu is central to my investigation. With her combined Romanian and American perspectives, Stanescu brings a unique quality to my examination of how Romanian playwrights are recycling material from their pasts to motivate the Romanian people to action. Since Stanescu is the oldest of the group of playwrights I am analyzing, she has a unique perspective of life during communism; Stanescu lived under Ceauseşcu's reign longer than the other playwrights and her memories are from both childhood and adulthood. Stanescu is not reliant on how others recount history to her, or what she may have learned from books—she was a witness to the Revolution as an adult and those experiences are layered into her writing.

Each of these three plays by Saviana Stanescu is a haunting for both Romanian and American audiences. Stanescu manages to marry topics that are unique to each country with topics that are more universal in order to get her messages across. While the general theme is "American dream turned nightmare," there are other issues that she tackles, including perception vs. reality, fact vs. fiction, and the links between communities and generations. She situates her characters in literally and metaphorically haunted situations and attempts to reconstruct their experiences and memories in an effort to recreate history and our understanding of the Romanian national identity. The result is the creation of an imagined nation that is part Romanian and part American, but still incomplete.

In a 2010 e-mail correspondence with Stanescu, I asked her about these three plays. She had some specific remarks about the state of Romanian playwriting today, especially in relation to the way her own work is received. She believes that Romanians are more interested in her earlier work, from before she left Romania, because her current work focuses on

> the American Dream turning into a nightmare, and people over there still believe in the American Dream, most of them are dissatisfied with Romania and wished [sic] they could live in the West/USA. Everybody talks about leaving Romania each time I go there, they still look up at America, borrow styles and trends from here, the glamorous ones coming via Hollywood, not the 'real' ones coming through a play about the hard lives of immigrants. The new writing over there is going through an 'in yer face' stage, plus a mild realism phase, plus docudramas

> tackling social issues in Romania: corruption, the alienations of young people and what makes them want to leave Romania—those are the concerns over there, not my concerns as an immigrant in the USA, so it's understandable. (interview)

I find that Stanescu's response demonstrates her frustration that the focus for many Romanians is on moving to a mythical place (America) and that she believes her plays may actually help them understand the challenges they would face as immigrants to the United States. Stanescu appears to be encouraging her audiences to reimagine Romanian history, thereby enabling them to transition into the global community. What is also clear is that while she has a connection to her native country, and seems to understand what is happening there, she has also definitely made the United States her new home.

Aurolac Blues

The first of Stanescu's plays I will examine is *Aurolac Blues* (2006). Unlike both *Waxing West* and *Lenin's Shoe,* the play is set in Romania, not the United States. The two characters are children who have never left Bucharest, much less traveled abroad. Despite the fact that their understanding of the West is limited to what they overhear, the children have developed interesting ideas/fantasies about what life is like there. Stanescu uses a topical situation to frame this play, relying on her audiences' knowledge of current events in Romania.[51] The children, Elvis and Madona, are homeless, living on the street, and they spend the duration of the play sniffing aurolac and hallucinating.[52] The play's form is unlike the other two plays in this chapter—it is more stark realism than anything else, bearing little resemblance to Stanescu's other work. The characters sit on a street corner in Bucharest and talk to one another. There is no spectacle, aside from the things the characters say and the hallucinations they describe to each other. The play makes its impact by using young children as the main characters; Stanescu suggests in the stage directions that the actors playing the characters should be adults, in order to "suggest their premature maturity" (Denton 325). In addition to suggesting premature maturity, having adults portray the children is a tactic that invites the audience to picture themselves as the characters and imagine the same things that the characters do. This tactic is a kind of haunting too—Stanescu encourages her audiences to recall periods in their own childhood when they were

[51] The issue of homeless children (sometimes referred to as underground or street children) in Romania is a sensitive one. There have been several documentaries made depicting the lives they lead, and a report by the Council of Europe in 2000 estimated that there were at least 1,000 street children living in Bucharest.
[52] Aurolac is a type of silver paint that many of the street children in Romania sniff to get high.

carried away by fantasy and the possibilities that life may have held. These children embrace the fantasy of the West wholeheartedly; they are convinced that moving to America would be like living in paradise. Stanescu uses the innocence of the children to draw a connection to those in Romania who believe that America/the West is the solution to all problems. Stanescu complicates her perspective by juxtaposing her criticism of Romania's idolization of the West with skepticism toward the American Dream. She infuses this very short (9 pages) play with what she thinks are Western notions about Romania: vampires, Gypsy street children, and the desire to be just like Americans.

Elvis tells Madona that he is "transforming" into a vampire to protect her, but Madona is not convinced. To the audience, he appears to be hallucinating, while she is still relatively sober. He wants her to feel his heart so that she can see that he is transforming, but she says she cannot see with her hand. The children speak of their desire to see America when Elvis tells Madona that when he turns into a vampire he will fly to America,

> I mean just for a night or so. To see the sky-scrapers. The birds. The ocean. The city. I'm gonna eat a huge cheeseburger at McDonalds. With French fries. And Ketch Up. And mayonnaise. And pickles. Like those at the McDonalds in Victoriei Square, but much bigger… Then I'm gonna play basketball with the black kids. I'll let them win. Then I will drive a limo. A long white limo. I'll be very elegant. I'll go to a roof-party and dance with women with diamonds around their necks. You know, movie stars. Glimmering and all that. Like real stars. (Denton 326-327)

His notion of what daily life is like in America has been skewed by perception, not reality. Elvis' speech reflects childlike fantasy—a yearning for what he does not have. Regardless of our own nationality, we can relate to what Elvis says and can empathize with the desire to have something else and be somewhere else. Despite the different circumstances under which these children live, the text emphasizes that these fantasies are universal—we are able to imagine ourselves (or our children) having similar dreams. The text suggests an imagined community of dreamers, but then splits the community by underscoring the idea that Elvis' dreams can never be realized—he is a street orphan from Romania who sniffs paint. When Elvis turn into a vampire that will fly off to America, the text combines the myth of vampirism that haunts Romania with the myth that America is all cheeseburgers, limousines and celebrities. When the discussion in this chapter

moves to two of Stanescu's other plays, I will examine how both of them are examples of plays in which vampires *have* flown to America.

The play ends with Madona hallucinating that Elvis has turned into an angel, with silver wings and a silver face, as he begins to softly sing a song to himself. The two have completely abandoned reality. The text does not offer any resolution for these two. Perhaps this is because the reality in Romania is that there is no resolution for these street children of Bucharest; they continue to exist and continue to sniff aurolac. These characters represent a specific group of Romanians—abandoned, homeless youth—and their own history. The number of abandoned youth in Romania increased under Ceauşescu's communism, most likely as a result of his move banning abortion. The problem has continued to grow as Romania has suspended all international adoptions. Children who are unwanted may be placed in orphanages, but these facilities are over-crowded, and the focus is on infants and toddlers. For Elvis and Madona (and Romanian children like them), living on the street and having to fend for themselves is their reality. The text suggests that their reality is a part of Romania's present history that, like these children, is frequently ignored or dismissed. Written before Romania became part of the European Union, *Aurolac Blues* draws attention to the marginalized groups in Romania who are not so unlike everyone else, and perhaps suggests that the notion of what constitutes this nation should be expanded to include all groups.

Waxing West

Stanescu wrote *Waxing West* in 2003, which was the first year of her MFA program in Creative Writing at NYU. It is her first full-length play written in English and was inspired in part by her arrival in New York City the summer of 2001. The play's subtitle is *A Hairy Play in Two Acts and Four Seasons,* and it takes place in both New York City and Bucharest. The cast is broken into three groups: The Romanians (Daniela, Elvis, Marcela), The Americans (Charlie, Gloria, Uros) and The Ghosts (Ceauşescu/Dracula, Elena). Like main character Daniela, who is haunted by her not-too-distant past in Romania and her new experiences in the United States, Stanescu is influenced by her recent arrival in the United States and the desire to share what the transition has been like. Both women have personal histories that are shaped by their experiences in each country and they carry these histories with them. Daniela attempts to deny her Romanian history in favor of a fresh start in the United States, but ends up failing. Paul Connerton, author of *How Societies Remember,* claims that our bodily practices, specifically what he refers to as

"incorporating practice" (a smile, a handshake, words spoken to another) "keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions" (72). Daniela is unable to simply deny her past—Charlie expects her to prepare Romanian cuisine, which requires her to use her body as described by Connerton. In addition, she is flooded by memories/nightmares.

Waxing West can probably best be classified as a tragicomedy, as it combines both comic and dramatic elements. The main character Daniela is literally haunted by the ghosts of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu, who appear as vampires. The play unfolds as Daniela's memory and she introduces the audience to "her story" as it was and as it is now; her memories are presented via flashback, and each scene is designated with a title projected on a screen and announced by Daniela. The Ceauşescu/vampire scenes are classified as Daniela's nightmares and frequently involve Daniela addressing the audience directly while the Ceauşescus comment on choices she is making. These nightmares don't necessarily happen when Daniela is sleeping—instead, they are painful or difficult memories that she is reliving and sharing with the audience. To briefly summarize, Daniela moves to the New York City to participate in an arranged marriage to American businessman Charlie. Both have very different ideas about what the relationship will be like and are forced to confront the other's perceptions. Daniela faces difficulty adjusting to life in her new home and has frequent nightmares about the choices she is making. Ultimately, Daniela elects to return to Romania and the life she knows. She is scheduled to leave town when the Twin Towers are attacked and Charlie goes missing.

Stanescu does not shy away from uncomfortable discussions about how she thinks immigrants are perceived in the United States, she brings forward her criticisms of her fellow Romanians and their constant desire to follow the West, and then provides suggestions for how to go about navigating the global community. Stanescu's material can be classified as hauntings because she uses stories, myths, and perceptions that are commonly known and understood by her audiences. These stereotypes are often the result of historically based perceptions and biases. The text invites us to contribute to the way Romanian identities are being constructed in the global community by reminding us of what our biases and perceptions are and suggesting we reframe them.

The play begins with Daniela standing alone on stage, addressing the audience. She is attempting to calm herself down, and stresses the importance of telling "her story." Upon

acknowledging the audience, she begins an introduction, including her passport and visa numbers. Her address to the audience is reminiscent of how a person might provide personal information if they were being interrogated. She asks if the audience is from INS, and is then flooded by memories of the first time she saw Charlie's picture; the memory leads to a scene change to the family's Bucharest apartment in the year 2000. There we are introduced to Elvis (Daniela's younger brother) and Marcela (her mother). Stanescu sets the scene by describing the apartment: "A modest living room that also serves as a bedroom for Elvis, Daniela's brother. A big calendar with American cars hangs on the wall. Elvis is watching TV" (174-175). The apartment appears to be more American/Western than Romanian; while Stanescu describes the room as "modest," by including the calendar with American cars and naming one of the characters after an American icon, the text suggests a few of the ways Western influence is present in Romania.

The scene begins with Elvis and his mother Marcela arguing about his father; Elvis shares that his father "lost everything we had and ended up in jail," while Marcela claims that he was the victim of circumstances (175). They argue back and forth about his contributions to society, and Marcela provides some background information about life in Romania following the Revolution. She says,

> [a]ll the smart guys in Romania, in Russia, in the whole Eastern Europe, did what was to be done, robbed the damn dead socialist state, seized those ugly gray factories, buildings, lands, Ceauşescu's gold, something, everything, everybody with a tiny bit of brain stole what was to be stolen, and everything was to be stolen, in '90, in '91, even in '92, one could make a fortune in a blink, one smart enough to be in the right place at the right time and sign a damn piece of paper, "this factory is mine," "those tons of oil are mine," "I'm the owner, I sell them to you," to the foreigners, to the Americans, for dollars, REAL money, that's all, MONEY, privatizing yourself, bribing who was to be bribed, opening businesses! Everybody moved around but your father. (175-176)

This exposition provides context about one perspective of what life was like in Romania following Ceauşescu's execution and the fall of communism. Marcela's account does not paint Romania in a positive light; on the contrary, she claims that many Romanians openly disregarded the laws, making a great deal of money in the process.

On the heels of her criticism of the behavior of some Romanians following the fall of communism, Marcela makes an ironic admission—she is expecting an American woman named Mrs. Aronson who is coming to meet Daniela, to set up a match between Daniela and her son, Charlie. Marcela imagines that Daniela will marry the "rich, decent, well-educated American," move there, and take her family with her (178). The revelation that she is willing to essentially sell her daughter for a piece of the American dream, not unlike the men she was recently criticizing, appears to be lost on Marcela. She does not see the similarities between her aspirations for her family and those of the Romanian people following the Revolution. Her own experiences of the past, even those she merely observed, shape the way she approaches the present, and she makes choices in what she perceives is the best interest of her family. Elvis sees what his mother has in mind more clearly, and views it as an opportunity for him to profit as well. Right before Mrs. Aronson enters, Elvis tells his mother, "Just don't sell Dani for less than a VCR, a DVD player, and a video camera!" (179).

Not long after Mrs. Aronson's visit is the first of what Stanescu has labeled "nightmares." These scenes feature Elena and Nicolae Ceauşescu interacting with one another and commenting on choices Daniela has made. The scenes function as visions for us as mediated by Daniela. In addition, the text presents these sections as literal and figurative hauntings—the Ceauşescus are ghosts and are reminiscent of an extremely difficult time in Romania's recent past. In the first nightmare, set in a cemetery, Daniela is visiting her father's grave and talking to him about the upcoming move to America. Nicolae and Elena are there to reunite following their executions. Both Ceauşescus are portrayed as blood-sucking vampires. Thanks in no small part to Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula,* a common misconception is that Romania (and especially Transylvania) is a land of vampires. For many Romanians, this characterization—that the country is overrun by blood-suckers—is frustrating. While I acknowledge that this sweeping generalization of Romania is inaccurate, I cannot help but appreciate the similarities between Ceauşescu and a vampire: both drained people of their life blood, both are reported to enjoy torturing helpless creatures, both appear to be driven by an unquenchable thirst (for blood, for power), and both strike fear in the hearts of many. By depicting Elena and Nicolae as vampires, the text re-claims the stereotype of Romanians as vampires, thereby rendering it false. Clearly identifying stereotypes like this one as untrue forces a closer examination of who the Romanian people

actually are and guides us to embracing an understanding of Romanian national identity that is based on fact, not myth.

After the cemetery, the action moves to the United States in Spring 2001, where Daniela appears in an Upper East Side apartment. Daniela delivers a monologue to Charlie in which she provides exposition about their relationship. Charlie disregards Daniela's speech, as he is busy working on his laptop. Elena and Nicolae observe Daniela, having traveled to New York from Romania to continue haunting her and to have fun, "sucking capitalist blood in a socialist, democratic way" (180). Daniela is defending herself for stealing a bottle of Vitamin C from the corner drugstore, and trying to convince Charlie that everything she does for him, especially those things she really hates doing, should make up for the theft. Charlie's insistence that Daniela prepare Romanian meals and play out a sexual fantasy of his so-called "turkey game" force her to perform certain bodily practices she despises. Having to repeat certain actions (preparation of meals, sexual play) leads back to Connerton's theory of bodily practices and how they prevent forgetting. The inclusion of Elena and Nicolae in the scene, and especially their ability to comment on what is happening, is an effective tool for haunting. Just as Romanians were subjected to constant surveillance and censorship under Ceauşescu's regime, Daniela's thoughts are now monitored and invaded by Ceauşescu's ghost.

Daniela introduces scene five, a flashback, as "Everybody Wants to Go to America?" and the action returns to Bucharest following Mrs. Aronson's visit. Daniela, Marcela, and Elvis are pouring over letters written by Romanian women to Daniela, who have heard she has acquired an American husband and hope she can help them do the same. Prominently displayed in the living room is a new VCR, which Elvis periodically caresses. The presence of the VCR indicates that Mrs. Aronson and Marcela made a deal uniting Daniela and Charlie, with the VCR as payment. The title of the scene, posed as a question, acknowledges that perhaps not everyone does want to go to America. While the letters Daniela receives certainly indicate that many women in Romania do, she is having second thoughts about whether or not America can live up to all of the excitement. The text teases out additional stereotypes about Romania and America. One of the letters that Daniela reads goes

> Dear Miss Daniela, I know that at my age I don't have any chance to marry an American. And, truth to be told, I don't want to marry one of them. I've heard

> they are weird. They sleep with guns under their pillows. They have drugs for breakfast everyday. And put drugs in your coffee if you're not careful. (190)

Stanescu counters this negative portrayal of American men by having Marcela claim that when Daniela gets to America she will have

> [r]obots that clean the house for you. Machines that cook by themselves. Money that is invisible numbers on a small card like this! [The stage directions indicate she shows an imaginary card, i.e. credit card, by using her thumb and forefinger.] She won't have to worry about anything. (190)

These examples mitigate the earlier negative commentary about Americans by suggesting that there are luxuries in America that are worth any inconveniences Daniela may experience.

What follows this scene, where Marcela attempted to convince Daniela that marrying Charlie is a good idea, is a parallel scene in which Gloria attempts to convince Charlie that marrying Daniela is a bad idea. She is horrified that Charlie is willing to let their mother go to Romania and pick a wife for him, without meeting her first. While Gloria berates Charlie for allowing his mother to make life decisions for him, she fails to see how she is also pushing Charlie to do what she thinks is best for him. Charlie has clearly grown up in an environment where the women in his life have pressed him to make choices (or in some cases made the choices for him). In this way, Charlie and Daniela are alike, although they may not realize it. Neither fully chose to enter into the relationship; in Charlie's case, it appears as though his mother talked him into the relationship and he is not particularly invested. As evidenced by the scene with Gloria, Charlie is more interested in doing what makes his mother happy than what makes him happy. Daniela agreed to marry Charlie because it meant the possibility of something better for her family, and because her prospects for marriage in Romania seemed slim. This is reflected in the scene that follows, where Daniela visits her father's grave. She talks to him about promises he made while he was alive, that they would move into a castle, that she was a princess, that they would live happily-ever-after. She suggests that the reason she is moving to America is to fulfill that promise of happiness for herself and her family. The text seems to suggest that Romania's obsession with America was a coping mechanism for the horrors they experienced under Ceauşescu and continues to function as a fairy tale, bringing hope and comfort when life is difficult.

We next see what appears to be a "blind date" between Charlie and Daniela in Central Park. It quickly becomes apparent that the two already know one another and this is an attempt to invigorate their relationship. They both wear dark sunglasses and are "playing" blind, saying

> DANIELA: I thought that playing blind would help, but you're a catastrophe at it.
> CHARLIE: I thought we wouldn't talk so much if we played blind.
> DANIELA: I thought we'd have fun if I could extract you from your Siamese laptop. For a different kind of game. Nothing about turkeys, everything about us! To go out, to play a little in the fresh air, to smell the spring, maybe to have a nice dinner and talk about us…(198-199)

By "playing blind" the characters pretend not to see any of the issues that plague their relationship, imagining that everything is fine and they have a blank slate on which to start fresh. Daniela appears to be more invested in figuring out how to mend their damaged relationship, while Charlie's behavior indicates a detachment from anything emotional. Instead, he wants to focus the conversation on Daniela's relationship with her friend Uros. Daniela tells Charlie that Uros is a former teacher of philosophy and dead languages who fled Yugoslavia following the ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia from 1991-1995. Charlie refers to him as a "crippled Muslim bum" (199). Charlie appears jealous of Daniela's relationship with Uros; she clearly admires his intellect and passion for learning. Charlie once again attempts to redirect Daniela, this time by kissing her. Daniela pushes him away, reinforcing that Charlie is more interested in a physical relationship with Daniela, while her interests are in companionship and dialogue.

The relationship between Uros and Daniela is revealed in more detail. Uros, confined to a wheelchair, lives in the subway station near Charlie's apartment. He asks Daniela for a radio and a one-way plane ticket to the Middle East so he can follow "in Gilgamesh's footsteps" (200). Daniela appears to want to give Uros what he asks for, but reminds him that she has no money of her own and cannot ask Charlie for money to give Uros. Uros explains that he wants to go to the Middle East on a "honeymoon with Death," who "gulped" his wife, his son, his daughter. When Daniela asks Uros if he wants to go to Iraq to fight and die, he avoids answering her directly. The discussion shifts to one about the pursuit of knowledge, and Uros asks Daniela if she stole books for him from Barnes and Noble using "the strategy I taught you?" (202). Daniela's habit of shoplifting appears to have come from Uros, but she does not seem completely convinced that taking something without paying for it is justified, no matter how much a person wants or needs

it (202). Like Charlie did earlier, Uros attempts to derail the conversation by attempting to seduce Daniela. She is unable to convince Uros that she only wants to be friends, and leaves him in the subway station. Elena and Nicolae watch the interaction, and decide they want to put Daniela on trial for her crimes. The scene ends and we enter another "nightmare," which Daniela reminds us has "nothing to do with my 'real' life. They are just dreams" (204).

In past nightmares, Nicolae and Elena merely observed and made comments about choices Daniela made. In this scene, however, they verbally and physically interact with Daniela, calling her names, ripping her shirt, exposing her breasts to the audience, and making fun of her "small nipples." As Daniela struggles to find someone who will engage with her on an emotional level, her level of anxiety appears to escalate, which is then reflected in her nightmares. Both Elena and Nicolae appear focused on punishing Daniela just as they were punished at the hands of the Romanian people; Nicolae claims their 1989 trial was

> [n]othing but a parody plotted by the foreign agencies and carried out by my own people. Poor stupid bastards, they got drunk on power. The power that I gave them! I made them. I created them. And how did they pay me back? They let themselves being [sic] by my enemies, by the Western spies, by those jackals plotting to steal our country, to destroy the Golden Dream of communism, to steal our wealth, to steal our lives. (205)

Elena continues

> [o]urs was not a trial. They killed us with no trial. A bunch of worms. No spines, no brains. We should have kept them in the darkness forever. Send them all to prison. Starve them to death. Crash all those ugly dirty pipsqueak thieves, those Romanians…(205)

The text draws attention to the different ways the 1989 Romanian Revolution and subsequent fall of communism in Romanian can be interpreted. For the Ceauşescus, there is a complete disregard for their own culpability in the state of the Romanian nation. The text doesn't appear to give their perspective any credibility, as evidenced by the fact that the characters next launch into a song and dance presented in the style of vaudeville

> NICOLAE: I am a good dictator
> Everyone can confess
> The tender fine impalements

Relieve you from the stress
ELENA: Report for us dear comrades
Describe your dying seasons
We need to know exactly
For scientific reasons
NICOLAE AND ELENA: Bye-bye, die-die, comrade!
Bye-bye, die-die, friend!
The bottom of the story
In its perfect end.
The story of the bottom
In its perfect end. (207)

The song lyrics point to the history of one of Romania's most notorious leaders, Vlad the Impaler.[53] Similarly, Ceauşescu's reputation speaks to the horrors he imposed upon his fellow Romanians, especially those who dared contradict him.[54] In fact, Ceauşescu considered Vlad a role-model; in 1976, the five hundredth anniversary of Vlad's death, Ceauşescu ordered a commemorative stamp with Vlad's image be printed in his honor. (McNally 75) The play leverages Nicolae and Elena's admiration of such a notoriously cruel leader in order to make a point about their leadership. The text is haunting, both with ghost characters and by using material that recalls the recent difficulties Romanians lived in. Daniela, who has functioned as observer for some time, announces at the conclusion of the song and dance, "I need a break." (207) This sentiment serves a dual purpose—it signals the end of Act 1 and the start of everyone's "break" (intermission), and reflects the general sentiment in Romania following Ceauşescu's reign.

Daniela attempts to take control over certain aspects of her life—Act Two begins with her sitting on the floor of the NYC apartment, surrounded by self-help books, with titles including "Dating, Mating, and Relating," "Unconditionally Accepting Yourself and Others," and "Resolving Your Past" (208). These titles, especially the latter two, directly relate to the

[53] Vlad Tepes, also known as Vlad the Impaler, was a 15th century Romanian prince who was born and raised in Transylvania and ruled in southern Romania. Vlad adopted the nickname Dracula from his father, who was known as Dracul, which means both "devil" and "dragon" in Romanian. Vlad the father got his name because he was inducted into the Order of the Dragon, a semi-militaristic organization dedicated to fighting the Turks. "Dracula" is a diminutive, meaning son of devil or dragon.
[54] See Chapter Two for additional information about how Ceauşescu punished and tortured the Romanian people.

themes of my project. Here Daniela represents not just herself, but serves as a metaphor for the nation of Romania. Both individual and nation seek guidance for how to acknowledge the past without getting mired in it. Another Connerton claim that the past influences our experience of the present is manifested here. Daniela tells the audience via direct address that she is looking to assuage her anxiety and improve her state of mind, but is frustrated by the process. She names what she believes are some of the stereotypes about Romanians held by Westerners,

> [d]ammit, this is gonna be difficult! You do not have the references to our complicated Romanian Dacian Tracian Roman Ottoman Byzantine Balkan communist post-communist anti-communist pro-American history, all you know about us is Dracula-the-vampire, Ceauşescu-the-dictator, and Nadia Comaneci-the-gymnast! [55] (208)

The text indicates that Daniela is making an effort to fit in with her new home, but that the stereotypes she perceives Westerners hold stand in her way. In some ways, her own status as a Romanian stands in her way, as the scene (and Daniela's self-help) is interrupted by a flashback to Romania for a scene entitled "Life and Death in University Square."

Elvis and Daniela watch a protest in Bucharest's University Square. The scene provides some information about the history of protest in Romania, especially how University Square has been the site of several significant historical events in Romania's recent history.[56] At the same time, we learn more about Daniela and Elvis and how they view the making of history. Daniela and Elvis discuss the significance of University Square and the role it has played in history. Daniela recalls the miners revolt against Illiescu, who was elected after Ceauseşcu, referring to his campaign slogan '"the communist with a human face.' What a joke" (209). She goes on to upbraid Elvis for his apathy, reminding him that his observations of history have been based on what he saw on television, while she was actually present. Elvis retorts, telling Daniela that for all of her bluster, her

> [o]pposition hasn't done shit. A bunch of corrupted snobs! Your intellectuals got us here, in this shitty situation, and washed their hands of us. We are doing gooood! In the year of our Lord, 2000, we have to choose between the good old communist Illiescu and the bad old crazy Vadim, who declared he'd close the

---

[55] See Chapter Two for additional information about Romania's recent political history.
[56] Including protests in 1989 (Revolution), 1990, 1992, 1996, and more recently in January 2012.

> borders and take us back to the dark caves, where it seems we belong anyway.
> (Gerould, 209-210)

The debate between the siblings indicates that among Romanians there are different ideas about remembering and making history. The memories that are created produce a haunting that helps shape the Romanian national imagination. Daniela's memory of events, while based on "being there" differs greatly from that of Elvis. These histories are contested, even among family members experiencing the events at the same time. The play reiterates that there is no one correct history of Romania—that everyone recollects the events as influenced by their own experiences.

Daniela's experiences in the United States appear to be very different than those in Romania. She begins to act upon her sexual attraction to Gloria, Charlie's sister, who has been encouraging her to live the life she wants to lead, not the life people expect her to lead. Throughout the play, Gloria has flirted with Daniela, but Daniela has always put her off. Gloria has encouraged Daniela to "forget" Charlie and be her own woman. She reveals to Daniela that Charlie always did exactly what their mother wanted him to do, and suggests that his engagement to Daniela was just a way to please his mother. Daniela infers from Gloria's speech that Charlie has no intention of marrying her. At this point, she changes the conversation and asks Gloria to go back to "her place" because she knows Gloria wants her (212-213). The abrupt change in topic and tactic may suggest that Daniela is taking an active role in pursuing her own identity (desires) in freedom, or that she has chosen to disregard what she is "supposed" to do and act on the attraction she may have for Gloria. It is somewhat surprising that Stanescu has elected to depict a potential lesbian relationship in *Waxing West*, as homosexuality in Romania is still highly controversial.[57] The text suggests that the women are using one another to suit their own purposes. Gloria, confident in her sexuality, sees Daniela as exotic and different from the American women to whom she is accustomed. Daniela may be experimenting with her sexuality in a place where homosexuality is not so denigrated, but she also seems keenly aware that she may need to leverage her relationship with Gloria if she wants to stay in the United States longer.

The scene that follows is the enactment of the "turkey game" that Daniela referred to earlier in the play. Charlie is on the floor of the apartment, wearing only white socks. There is a

---

[57] From 1864 until 1996, homosexual acts were considered illegal in Romania. In 1996, it was legal for same-sex couples to act on their feelings in their own homes, but not in public. Starting in 2000, homosexual acts were legalized, but there is still a taboo associated with homosexuality. In the United States homosexuality is not illegal, but there can still be a stigma associated with it.

makeshift oven, made of empty boxes, and Daniela holds a plastic knife in her hand. She calls Charlie a turkey, tells him he is so yummy, and that she is going to eat him up. She pretends to cut him with the knife, repeating how yummy he is, and Charlie climaxes. Suddenly, Daniela launches herself at Charlie, wielding the knife. She says, "I'm gonna prick you, turkey. Stab you. Kill you. Murder you. Yum-yum! Bye-bye, turkey. Die-die. Die-die!" (214-215). Daniela's words echo those used by the Ceaușescus earlier—their words were used to refer to the torture they inflicted on their enemies, and here Daniela uses words that demonstrate she considers the entire experience torturous. The knife comes away, bloody, as Daniela cries. Charlie winces in pain and then wipes Daniela's tears away. In the background stand Elena and Nicolae, who are fascinated by the turn Daniela has taken. It is mid-July 2001, and Daniela has been in the United States for about seven months. She is clearly becoming more and more frustrated by her situation: she is far from home, is not yet married, her fiancée refuses to talk about anything and has a strange sexual fetish, she has taken up shoplifting, and is confused about her feelings for her fiancée's sister. Nicolae and Elena are gleeful that Daniela is falling apart, and see Charlie emerging as a "weak-spot-of-the-first-degree" for Daniela, who they feel sure will apologize to Charlie instead of "finishing the job" (215). The so-called "American dream" is not something Daniela has found; the text indicates she is beginning to realize that perhaps it is a myth, that she is not a princess, she will never live in a castle, and the happily-ever-after she and her father talked about in her youth does not exist.

Later that night we see Charlie working one-handed on his laptop while the other arm is bandaged where he was stabbed during the turkey game. Daniela apologizes, and attempts to get him to talk about what happened, but he refuses. She admits that she is thinking about returning to Romania because she cannot do anything right in America. Charlie responds that this is her home, but when queried about when they will get married, he is evasive. He does tell Daniela that they will not have to play the turkey game anymore, which is a great relief for her. Talking about the turkey game segues ironically into a discussion about Thanksgiving, and they both agree they will celebrate it at their apartment, perhaps inviting Gloria. Daniela is about to suggest they invite Uros when Charlie interrupts, insulting Uros and telling her that he tried to sell Charlie his own tie. He admits that while he did not buy back the tie, he did give Uros some money. It seems that Charlie and Daniela are both having positive effects on each other, despite their multiple problems as individuals. The issue of marriage lingers, however, as Daniela keeps

pressuring Charlie to commit and Charlie continues to avoid a serious discussion. The scene concludes with Daniela addressing the audience. She admits that the relationship is far from perfect, that "something is missing," but she vehemently defends Charlie's character, as though she is putting all of the blame for the problems in the relationship on herself. Daniela's reluctance to place any blame on Charlie may indicate she is incapable of seeing the reality of their "relationship." She speaks to the audience and acknowledges that they are probably wondering why she doesn't just leave Charlie, get a job as a waitress like "so many illegal immigrants do." The text reveals Daniela's assumptions about what Americans believe about immigrants, but at no time have any of the Americans in the play suggested she "get a job" or that she is in any way less important than they. This seems to be a case of Romanians supplicating the West for attention and respect, always seeing themselves as "less than" Americans, whom they idealize. This ideal view is punctured by Uros in the next scene, which we enter as Daniela picks up a radio and carries it with her into the subway station at Times Square (219).

Here, Uros is lying on a subway bench, seemingly asleep. Daniela attempts to rouse him and realizes that he is sick. They engage in a conversation wherein he berates her for becoming too American and she attempts to convince him that he needs to take better care of himself. Uros does a fair amount of criticizing Americans in this scene, telling Daniela,

> [y]ou grew to talk like them. All the American propaganda bullshit. Relax, I won't ask you to steal Charlie's bed. [. . .] The earthworms in the white limos. They have the power. The money. They trade your limbs, your organs, your life, your time. Even your stories! But they cannot trade your thoughts, even THEY cannot. (221)

In the same scene that Daniela appears finally to be feeling more at home in America, one of her only friends derides her for her newfound American habits. The text suggests the predicament many immigrants may find themselves in: assimilate to the new country to fit in, but risk ridicule from friends and family "back home." Uros represents Eastern European immigrants who come to the United States without the benefit of a sponsor, and who struggle to acclimate and survive. He also represents immigrants who both fear and despise their host country. He arrived in the United States after his family was killed and he was crippled in the war in the former Yugoslavia. The specific circumstances surrounding his relocation to the United States are not

revealed, nor how he ended up living in the subway station. Uros is a touchstone for Daniela, reminding her of the choices she made and the distance she traveled to be where she is. At the same time, he may serve as an impetus for Daniela to move on, acting as a constant reminder of how America is not Eastern Europe, thus wearing on Daniela and forcing her to make a choice about her life. As Uros' illness causes him to ramble unintelligently, Nicolae and Elena appear in the scene. Their presence signals that this particular memory is particularly painful for Daniela, and that it haunts her present.

The next scene is a flashback—Daniela's departure from Bucharest for America. Her mother imparts advice, including how Daniela needs to be on her best manners, puts on clean underwear every day, and doesn't raise her voice to her future mother-in-law. The good-byes are not particularly emotional; Elvis calls Daniela Mrs. Aronson, her mother keeps reminding her how many suitcases she has, and Daniela seems more introspective. She mentions for the first time that Charlie is a computer engineer who works on the sixty-sixth floor of a skyscraper. In nearly every scene he is in, Charlie is using his laptop, but the text never reveals what his job is or where he works. He repeatedly puts Daniela off when she asks about marriage, by telling her that he needs to wait until he is on vacation. Charlie's continued focus on his job may be a criticism of the perception that Americans focus on work too much. It may also be a depiction of the stereotype of a "typical American male"—Charlie eschews human interaction for technological relationships, which we see reinforced in the next scene. Daniela's idealism is reflected as leaves her mother and brother, proclaiming, "I'm not gonna cook, I'm not gonna scrub. I can promise you that" (223).

The scene shifts forward, as Daniela, Charlie and Gloria return from Mrs. Aronson's funeral. They arrive at Charlie's apartment, which is an utter mess. Gloria is disgusted by the state of the apartment, Daniela embarrassed, and Charlie unapologetic. Gloria leaves, outraged that Daniela has offered to clean up. Daniela asks if she can get Charlie anything, which leads to him convincing her to make him a Romanian dinner and clean his apartment while he works on his computer. The life Daniela imagined for herself has changed so quickly. Her desire to please her future husband and help him deal with the death of his mother leads her to abandon all of the promises she made to herself before leaving home.

Several months pass between the scenes, and it is now August 2001. Daniela returns to the subway station to visit Uros. Once again he is lying down on a bench, but this time with a

small radio playing classical music softly next to his head. Daniela approaches him full of enthusiasm. She tells him that she used Charlie's credit card to purchase Uros and herself a one-way ticket out of New York. Uros' ticket is to Iraq and Daniela's is for Romania. As she tells Uros of the plan, Elena and Nicolae are revealed, watching. They comment on Daniela's stupidity as she continues to talk, wavering somewhat in her resolve. Maybe she should stay, since her mom loves to tell people that her daughter is married to an "American businessman." Eventually Daniela realizes that Uros has died, and she takes the radio to return it to Charlie. Elena and Nicolae do a gleeful dance celebrating that Daniela has been wounded, and continue to look for her "Weak-Spot-of-the-First-Degree" (229).

The scene segues into the last nightmare; Elena and Nicolae are at a party, drinking red wine and talking about how silly Daniela is. Daniela reveals to the audience that she was born in the "Year of the Horse" but Nicolae and Elena continue to refer to her as their pet pig. Daniela prostrates herself before them, licking their hands and referring to herself as their ashtray. Elena and Nicolae are horrified by Daniela's behavior and claim she is too crazy for them. They tell her to leave them alone, and proceed to "devour" one another as they sing. Once they are finished, Daniela tells them "cheers" and introduces the next scene (229-234). Daniela's "cheers" appears to have a dual meaning. On one hand, she may be attempting to bid a final farewell to Elena and Nicolae, attempting to dismiss them once and for all from her dreams and to start her life free of the nightmares of the past. On the other hand, she is using the wine at hand to toast the end of the nightmare.

The next scene takes place on September 11, 2001. Daniela is packing for her return to Romania. Charlie keeps asking if she is really sure she wants to go back. Daniela reminds him that he does not love her, and Charlie admits he never really wanted to get married in the first place. He then launches into a mini-tirade about women, saying, "I hate the American self-righteous women. The Latino over-talkative chicks. The British snobbish giraffes. The French sexy inflatable dolls. The Asian midget mistresses" (238). Charlie's list is a series of stereotypes of women from various countries. He appears to have bought into these stereotypes, although he tells Daniela "I'm okay with you, though." Daniela is not particularly moved by his revelation, lashing out at him with "Mrs. Aronson told me you were kind, smart, sweet, tender, funny, generous, gentle, well-behaved, polite, loving, lovable, SPECIAL!" (239). Charlie concedes his mother was somewhat blind when it came to him, discouraging him from what he loved to do

(play the violin) in favor of what she thought he should do (work with computers). This speech, the longest from Charlie thus far, is a clearer indication of what Charlie represents. Throughout the text he has been distant from Daniela, interested only in pursuing a sexual relationship. He has consistently put off her questions about marriage, choosing to focus on his work. No longer is Charlie the stereotypical American man who is blindly doing what he is told. Instead of merely viewing him as Daniela's opportunity for a new life in America, it is possible to see a viable emotional connection between them. Daniela reminisces, admitting that she is

> [t]rying to imagine him playing the violin. I can't. There's no violin sound that I can associate with him. Only keyboard clicks. Click click click. Click click click…Wait a minute! (A violin can be heard louder and louder). (239)

Daniela realizes that she does care about Charlie, despite the last ten months. From the corner of the scene, we hear Elena say, "Weak-Spot-of-the-First-Degree: DETECTED" (239). Now that Daniela has acknowledged her feelings for Charlie and is making decisions based on what she wants, the Ceauşescus discover her weakness and commit to discovering ways they can make her suffer. Unlike in past nightmares, Elena and Nicolae are not visible in this scene—they are only heard from. Despite Daniela's earlier dismissal of them, however, they don't appear to be completely gone from her memories.

The next scene is titled, "Flash back, flash forward," and is presented as a series of fragments; characters talk over one another and there is a palpable sense of urgency to the action. The action moves rapidly back and forth between Daniela's memories and her reality. By deviating from the form she has established so far, Stanescu sets this scene apart from the rest of the play. Elena and Nicolae appear, talking about the smell of blood in the air, their attempted escape from the crowd of Romanians, the accusations of heinous crimes, their trial and subsequent execution on live television on Christmas day. Daniela, Marcela, Gloria and Elvis are talking about the sky, the towers, watching on TV, and running. The characters continue to repeat "run!" several times throughout the course of the scene. The audience by now may have realized that Stanescu has drawn a parallel between the September 11, 2001 attacks and the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Stanescu's own experiences/memories of these catastrophic events lead her to set them against one another. There are similarities between the two situations, including the overwhelming fear, anxiety, panic, and horrible brutality. The primary difference is that the attacks in the United States left thousands of innocent people dead by someone else's

hand, and the Romanian Revolution lead to the death of Elena and Nicolae at the hands of their persecuted people. The way the text presents the attacks on Towers 1 and 2 of the World Trade Center on September 11 is very chaotic, disjointed, breathless, and scary. The text haunts both Romanian and American audiences by using historic, but still very present, events as the climax to the play. By utilizing the material and presenting it in this manner, similar to the chaos and anxiety surrounding the events themselves, the haunting is taken to the next level—it is not enough to recycle material, emotions are recycled as well.

Daniela dismisses the other characters from the stage, and "talks" to Charlie. She tears up her plane ticket home, tells him she can hear him playing the violin, and asks him if they can start again. She then addresses the audience, displaying Charlie's picture, and asks if anyone has seen Charlie. She describes him, and tells us that he worked on the sixty-sixth floor of one of the Twin Towers. The way Stanescu has written this scene evokes the way thousands of Americans searched for their loved ones following September 11. Pleas were made on television nightly, with spouses, siblings, parents and friends showing pictures, giving descriptions, and telling the audience on which floor their loved one worked. This scene, with its horrifying familiarity, brings together the traumatic events of both communities, and nations. The text creates links between the communities and suggests that they acknowledge these similarities rather than ignore them. By evoking the memories and connecting the histories, the text appears to be suggesting that as painful as these memories are, they have shaped the people of their respective nations today. Again I return to Connerton, who claims that the events and actions of the past help shape the present, and the experiences of the present are influenced by our knowledge of the past: Daniela's story has been presented as a series of memories that resurfaced as her present experience was traumatic, preventing her from moving completely out of her nightmares and into reality.

Waxing West received its professional debut in 2007, when Richard Schechner's East Coast Artists produced it in conjunction with the Romanian Cultural Institute-New York at LaMaMa Theatre. Prior to this production, the play was part of the Bare Bones series at the Lark Play Development Center in 2003. In 2007, *Waxing West* received the New York Innovative Theatre Award for Outstanding Full-length script. The show ran at LaMaMa for three weeks.

New York Times critic Wilborn Hampton referred to the play as “intriguing and entertaining”,[58] while independent theatre critic Martin Denton wrote,

> [a] play like Saviana Stanescu's *Waxing West* is so important. Stanescu has gone through something like what my great-grandparents went through, only it happened to her within the past few years: she lived through the Ceauşescu regime in Romania and its chaotic aftermath, then came to New York in early September 2001. In *Waxing West*, she tells her own and many of her compadres' stories, tracing a couple of years in the life of the fictional Daniela, a young woman who journeys from Romania to America seeking marriage and comfort and stability and finding, well, pretty much the opposite. (www.nytheatre.com)

Waxing West provides an excellent canvas on which to examine both Connerton’s assertions about societal memory and Carlson’s theory of haunting. The text examines how immigrants to the United States are haunted by societal and personal memory and how these hauntings can make moving past these memories difficult.

Lenin’s Shoe

The final Stanescu play for analysis, *Lenin’s Shoe,* continues in the same vein. Stanescu refers to these plays (*Waxing West* and *Lenin’s Shoe*) as part of her “American play” series in which she examines the ways Eastern European immigrants attempt to redefine “home” upon moving to America.[59] She uses similar subject matter from *Waxing West* (e.g., communism, acclimation, generational divide, cultural divide) to tell this the story. Also similar to *Waxing West* is the way Stanescu creates links between communities (Eastern Europe and America) in an effort to highlight the similarities and the differences that exist. Stanescu’s hauntings of events and memories familiar to her varied audience (Westerners and immigrants alike) and the ways in which she links the communities to one another potentially stimulates the audience to re-examine recollections of the past and aspirations for the future. She reminds us that cultural differences are not always cause for separating ourselves from one another—they can also serve as bridges to healing and understanding.

The form of *Lenin’s Shoe* is similar to *Waxing West*; there are no flashbacks or nightmares, but Stanescu again mixes comedy and drama, and allows the main character to share

---

[58] Hampton’s “Go West, Young Woman (Ceausescu Ghosts Too)” ran in the New York Times on April 17, 2007.

[59] I was fortunate enough to see *Lenin’s Shoe*, produced by the Lark Play Development Center in NYC in February 2006, and to spend several hours speaking in person with Stanescu about the production and her work in general.

his inner thoughts with the audience. Rather than directly addressing the audience, Vlad is a blogger. As he composes each blog post, he reads it to the audience, but without acknowledging that anyone is listening. The characters in *Lenin's Shoe* represent several Eastern European nations, among them Romania, Russia, Bosnia, and Macedonia. Knowing the characters represent many Eastern bloc countries, it appears at first glance as though the title of the play refers to Lenin's vast reach in Eastern Europe and his metaphorical shoe on the throats of those people. As the play evolves however, a second, more personal meaning is revealed. The play is set in Queens, New York in December of 2003. Much of the action takes place in the home of Russian immigrant Ivan Ivanovich and his son Vlad;[60] the first floor is the location of the family restaurant, called "Uncle Vanya," and the second floor is where the family lives. Several scenes are also set in the Queens apartment that Jasna (Romanian/Macedonian/Bosnian) and Hassan (Bosnian) share with their son Alex. Stanescu best summarizes the play in the published version of the text,

> Vlad, the crippled son of a Russian Mafioso, plans to kill his father—now owner of a restaurant in Queens. Vlad comments on reality by immersing himself into a virtual world of blogs, the only place where he can be himself. He also loves to rap. […] Alex and Irina, two other young loners, help Vlad to put his murderous plan into practice. On the other hand, Jasna—a former war correspondent, and Kebab—a former suicide bomber, try to find friendship and peace.

The play opens on Vlad sitting in his room, surrounded by books and shoes. He sits at his computer, with headphones on, and writes his blog. This entry is called "Loners' Party" and starts off with a paraphrase from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, "Abandon Hope and Stupidity, All Ye Who enter this Blog!" (3). He dictates the blog entry, including "smiley faces" and punctuation, as he writes, but eventually gets sidetracked into talking about the nurses he has had in the past and the various ways he has managed to "scare them off" by injuring himself. He tells us he has cut himself on several occasions, and once attempted to crucify himself (3). He eagerly anticipates the next candidate and preparing "fireworks for her, huge fireworks. Smiley face" (3). Based on the sheer number of books in his room and the quote from Dante, Vlad appears to be an intelligent, well-read young man. His sense of humor, while somewhat macabre, seems to be

[60] The Vlad in this play is a Russian immigrant, not Romanian. The name Vlad, short for Vladimir, means "prince," and is a popular name among Russian males.

intact. The reason Vlad needs a nurse is not clear; we know from his words that he has had several nurses and that he derives pleasure from hurting himself to shock and terrify his caregivers.

The next scene is down in the restaurant. We are introduced to Ivan/Vanya,[61] who is shouting from offstage at his employees. Jasna enters the restaurant and overhears Vanya ranting. Vanya sees Jasna, assuming she is there to get work as a waitress. Jasna tells him she is there for a tutoring job, having heard that there was a recent vacancy. Vanya informs her that Vlad needs a nurse, not a tutor. Jasna replies that she can be a nurse, a tutor, and can clean the house. Vanya is distracted by Jasna's accent and asks her what kind it is. She tells him it is "Russian-Romanian-Macedonian-Bosnian," to which he replies, "Powder keg! You're a powder keg." Jasna cautions him, "Don't smoke next to me," and the playful banter appears to work, as Vanya seems to soften (4). Vanya assumes that Jasna has a limited education and needs an entry-level job in the U.S. in order to get a green card. Jasna surprises him by telling him she has degrees in journalism and Slavic languages. She then produces a CV, which stymies Vanya. He begins to read, and notices that she was a war correspondent. Jasna appears to really want the job, while Vanya appears to think she is joking. As the scene continues, Vanya reveals that after what he will only refer to as "the accident," Vlad has attempted suicide 113 times. Vanya balks at Jasna's suggestion that he commit Vlad, maintaining that there is nothing wrong with his mind. Jasna offers that her son, Alex, is 17 and that her husband, Hassan, was the first Muslim Bosnian Poet Laureate in Macedonia.[62] She presses Vanya about the job, asking him to at least let her meet with Vlad. Finally Vanya concedes, after warning her that in the past the job was perfect for the "simple" women that he hired, and that he does not need an "over-educated woman who'd grow frustrated, bitter, and angry on life. I've got enough drama" (7). Stanescu provides the audience with a good deal of information in this scene. This background information is helpful for our understanding of the characters—we know that Jasna is well educated, but the zeal with which she pursues the job indicates that her education and experience have not helped her gain employment in the US. We learn that Vlad is prone to suicide attempts,

---

[61] It is common in Russia to have three names: a given name (which is frequently adapted to a nickname by close friends and family), a patronymic, a name derived from the father or another paternal ancestor, and a surname. In this case, Vanya is the diminutive of Ivan, which is the character's given name. ("Russian names," *Behind the Name: The Etymology and History of First Names,* n.d. 3 February 2012 http://www.behindthename.com/glossary/view/russian_names)

[62] According to Dictionary.com, the government of a nation appoints a Poet Laureate, who is "a poet recognized or acclaimed as the most eminent or representative of a country or locality" (n.d. 3 February 2012).

and that he is “a crippled boy” according to his father (7). The first scene foreshadowed Vlad’s propensity toward attempting suicide, but did not reveal his physical disability, as he sat behind a desk that hid his wheelchair.

Scene Three opens with Vlad sitting in his bedroom rapping. His wheelchair is now visible and shoes with the laces removed surround him. When Vanya and Jasna enter, Vanya announces he will be leaving for Russia soon and needs to find Vlad a new nurse. Vlad begins to perform his rap, “Hail, Mamma Russia Goes to Jail!”

> Go to jail, mamma
> Yo, go to jail
> You need a rest, mamma
> From this hell
> Everything sucks, mamma
> We screamin: booo
> Yo, booooooo
> I ain’t asked, mamma
> To be born to you!
> Who shots you? (11)

Jasna is very complimentary of the piece, but Vlad dismisses it as false praise. The scene moves back and forth between Vlad speaking in a kind of rap/hip-hop vernacular, Vanya trying to get Vlad to respond to him in complete sentences, and Jasna observing. Upon Vanya’s exit, Jasna tries to engage Vlad in a conversation, but he continues with his rap-speak. Jasna reminds him that Vanya left and he no longer needs to try and impress him, and then she asks him what kind of nurse he would like. His response is a crude, “You wanna take care of me? Suck my dick when my dick get hard?” (11). Jasna does not lose her temper with Vlad, but keeps asking him questions. The answer that seems to surprise her most is Vlad’s admission that he never leaves his bedroom. He tells her he spends a lot of time looking out the window, where he watches a man who waits by the restaurant’s dumpster for what gets thrown away. Vlad calls him “Kebab” because he is on the sidewalk “cooking in his own sauce,”[63] and remarks that Kebab and Vlad share something he refers to as a “murda-look” (11-12). Despite not ever leaving his room, Vlad appears to be completely immersed in Western culture, as evidenced by his tendency to rap and

[63] A reference to the fact that Kebab is homeless, living in the heat, and being “cooked” by the sun.

speak in hip/hop vernacular. His connection comes in the form of the internet and the images and games he watches and plays online. He appears unable to have any type of connection to an actual person, preferring the anonymity and emotional distance of virtual relationships.

The action moves to Jasna and Hassan's apartment, where Jasna is making dinner. She tells Hassan about her new job, appearing very excited about the position. Hassan does not appear to share her enthusiasm, wondering why she has to stay overnight and worrying that their son Alex will cause problems. Jasna tries to reassure him that this is a good thing for their family, that she will be bringing in a salary and that they can "start living." Hassan is unconvinced. Jasna tells him he can help her with dinner and he bristles. "Woman-job dinner. I am no woman" (15). Jasna is not happy with this reply and reminds him that they live in the United States now. She tells him, "Here you can not act as a spoiled prince anymore. We're nobody here. Get used to that. You are nobody here" (15). She continues that although Hassan was the first Muslim Bosnian Poet Laureate in Macedonia and accustomed to a degree of prestige, now that he lives in the United States, he needs to drive a limo for a living and cannot continue to expect the lifestyle he once knew. The conversation between the two establishes that Jasna appears to be trying to acclimate to her new home, while Hassan is resistant. It is unclear how long they have actually lived in the United States, or how they came to be there, but it is clear that the transition has been difficult.

Their son Alex arrives and Hassan tells him about his mother's new job. Alex tells Jasna that there is no need for her to take that job, since he has gotten a job. He is working as a dishwasher in a restaurant with a "Latino guy." This guy, says Alex, is

> [a] moron, he can not read or write, talk or think, but he knows everything about fucking explosives, coz he started a revolution in his country, and he knows how to make dirty bombs, you can make a bomb in a fucking bottle, and he's like "you Muslim boy, you know nothing!" and I'm like "Fuck off, what's your problem if I'm Muslim?" (16)

Jasna is horrified at Alex's vocabulary and reminds him that he is not Muslim, although she never identifies which faith he follows. She tells Hassan to say something to Alex, and when he does ("no talk like this!"), Alex ridicules him. Hassan reminds Alex that he is not Muslim, only Hassan is Muslim, and since moving to America he is no longer Muslim, but American. This exchange is very interesting, as Hassan's position is that a person cannot be both American and

Muslim. It may be that the text is asserting that Muslims are a group largely misunderstood in America, and that there are certain Americans who blame all Muslims for the 2001 attacks on the United States. In addition, the text appears to say that in order to "fit in" in the United States, Hassan needs to set aside his Muslim identity and try to assimilate to American culture. This perspective does not sit well with Alex, who berates his father:

> Good job, dad. You learned how to conjugate the verb to-be-American. They should give you citizenship for that. And a pair of underwear with the American flag imprinted on the crotch. (17)

The text establishes that Alex is not interested in adapting to American culture. On the contrary, it seems he has chosen to portray himself as something he is not (Muslim), knowing that he will be feared and perhaps hated by certain Americans he encounters. Jasna reprimands her son, who lashes out at her, saying, "You used to be a hot journalist, now you're nothing, you're shit!" (17). Alex storms out of the house despite Jasna's protests.

This scene is imbued with three drastically different perspectives of "home."[64] Jasna's experience, the first example, is a woman doing what she can to acclimate to her new country: she learned English, got a job, and is providing for her family. She wants her husband and her son to adjust in the same ways she has, and struggles to see from their perspectives. Hassan has a job, but is not particularly interested in fitting in in additional ways. His English is broken at best and he makes no effort to improve it. He spends his days and nights watching television and refuses to engage in any meaningful conversation about moving forward. Perhaps the most extreme depiction is of Alex's perspective. Alex appears to be very angry about the situation in which his family finds itself. He seems to want everything to be the way it was, and is depicted as overly critical of anything having to do with the United States. He is confrontational and volatile. Alex's choice to label himself Muslim, although he is not of that faith, takes a stereotypical label that amplifies all of the attributes he wants to convey about himself to others. Interestingly, this is in stark contrast to Hassan, who is of the Muslim faith. Hassan is passive and appears to care nothing for how he is perceived.

Following these perspectives on identity, we return to Vanya's home, where Vlad looks out his window onto the street below. He sees Kebab half covered by a blanket as he lies on the sidewalk. Jasna exits the apartment to smoke a cigarette and startles Kebab. He asks Jasna her

---

[64] I use "home" here to describe national identification illustrated by domestic situations and attitudes.

name and if she is alone. When she confirms she is alone, he points at himself and repeats "alone;" Jasna and Kebab appear to connect over their mutual states. Jasna notices that Kebab wears only socks and tells him that she is going to bring him some shoes. She tells him of a saying in her country about big feet ("one lives on big feet"), and tells him it means that people with big feet are very rich. She notes the irony of that statement since Kebab is homeless, and offers him a cigarette. She asks him what his real name is after telling him that Vlad refers to him as Kebab and after a moment he points to himself again and says "Kebab" (20). The two enjoy a comfortable silence, sitting and smoking, each seeming to recognize a fellow outsider in the other.

Scene 8 is back in Vanya's bedroom, where he and Irina have just finished making love. The scene starts off playfully, with Irina expressing how much fun she had, but turns more serious quickly. Vanya reminds Irina that her father, "Comrade Boris," is a friend of his and that she is his employee. Irina tells Vanya that she loves him; when he dismisses her, she becomes enraged. Vanya tries to calm Irina down by promising her a job in his new business venture, which includes "a new restaurant on Wall Street, a hotel in Brighton Beach, one in Florida, and a TV station for the East European community" (22). Irina launches another attack at him, this time revealing she knows what "his business" really is and essentially threatening to reveal it. When it appears as though her threat to expose him isn't working, Irina tries another tactic. She tells Vanya that she is pregnant, apparently thinking that this will make him stay with her. He does not react the way she anticipates:

> It's not an unsolvable problem. We can take care of this. We don't want to create problems for anyone, do we? Let's see. Do you want a nice car, what kind of car does my pretty little girl want, my sunshine, my sweetheart? Do you want a Porsche? (22)

Vanya's solution to the "problem" is that he will buy Irina whatever she wants so that she will have an abortion, thereby eliminating any "trouble" for anyone else. He is clearly accustomed to getting his way and being able to use his money to manipulate other people. However, it appears that Irina is also used to getting her own way and is not afraid of causing trouble, when she says to Vanya, "I want a Porsche…to run over your dick with!" (23). The scene ends on this line, with the power struggle unresolved for the time being.

The next scene returns us to the front of the house where Jasna and Kebab are still sitting and smoking. Jasna admits to Kebab that what she really needed was to sit with a complete stranger and let everything in her life go. She wants to make a fresh start, and Kebab has given her that opportunity. Their camaraderie is interrupted when Vlad opens the window above them and threatens to jump out. Jasna is not affected by his threat, and actually tells him, "Go ahead, Vlady, life is miserable, isn't it? The problem is you won't die jumping from the second floor. If you need a painful broken arm, it's gonna work. Go ahead, jump!" (23). Her lack of panic at his threat defuses Vlad and he slams the window closed. Vanya, who has heard the noise, comes outside. Vlad has apparently locked himself in his room and Vanya wants the key. Jasna admits that she left the key in the door, not knowing she was supposed to keep it with her. Vanya coldly replies that she should never be without the key. The differences between the ways Jasna and Vanya approach Vlad are becoming more and more pronounced. While Vanya has lived with Vlad and his suicide attempts for a long time and Jasna is new to the situation, it seems that Jasna already has a better handle on how to appease Vlad. Her method of refusing to get upset about his threats and treating him with humor appears to frustrate Vlad, primarily because he appears to like the drama he has been able to create. Vanya, on the other hand, treats Vlad with kid gloves and Vlad continues to push his buttons. Jasna and Vanya's different cultural upbringings may influence these disparate approaches to dealing with Vlad. Interestingly, the ways Vanya and Jasna approach Vlad is drastically different from how they deal with other people. Jasna has little patience for Alex's foul language or lack of discipline, and Vanya uses bribery to try and sway Irina.

The next scene is split between Vlad in his room working on his blog, and Alex composing an email. Both men are writing about Jasna, but the approach and attitude are starkly different. Vlad's blog has an entirely new tone:

> Not all women are pussies. There are women who are not afraid of Death. There are women who can smoke calmly their cigarette and stand under a rain of bombs. Women who can make love when everything around them is in flames. Bombs and orgasms. Big deaths, little deaths. The universe delivers His last monologue for her and she fucks the universe. I could love this woman, but she's too old, she could be my mom. Her name is Jasna. (24)

Vlad appears to have developed trust and admiration for Jasna in a short period of time. He admires her because of the experiences she has had and the way she interacts with him, not allowing him to wallow in self-pity or push her away like he has pushed away most other people. While Vlad's blog entry still dances on the edge of violence, there has been a shift in his thinking. On the other hand, Alex is writing an email to Jasna and he cannot hide his unhappiness:

> Mom, check your damn email, mom, check it! It must be nice living in that rich posh house, taking care of that spoiled Russian brat[…]You totally forgot about us. Dad cried in his soup today. I am the one who cooked, I made soup for both of us. Chicken soup. He doesn't do anything. He just sits in front of the TV, turned on mute, and declaims poems in Bosnian and Romanian. It's crazy in this house, mom. At school it's bad but at home it's even worse. I feel like making a bomb and blowing up all this shit! Fucking YOURS, Alex. (24-25)

Alex's email starts off as a complaint and has a child-like tone, but then turns angry and violent. This is the second time Alex has mentioned bombs, and the volatility of his proclamations is disconcerting. Both Alex and Vlad are prone to thoughts and/or dreams of violence, and both focus their violence in conjunction with women. In addition, the two young men are unable to separate their thoughts of violence from anything else. While Vlad benefits from Jasna's presence, Alex suffers from her absence. He is forced to do tasks he thinks are a mother's responsibility, which is confusing and leads him to make poor choices.

Jasna goes up to Vlad's room, where he is playing a violent video game. In an attempt to antagonize Jasna, he tells her that in the game he was hit by a bomb, either Serbian or Croatian, and pretends to die. Vlad tries to goad Jasna into talking about her family and their experiences before moving to America, but she dismisses him. Jasna suggests that they get rid of all of Vlad's shoes, as they are "old and full of dust, you don't need them anymore, we keep only those that fit you" (28). Vlad tells her that Vanya will be angry if they do that, and explains that the shoes are a gift from Vanya every time he comes back from a trip to Russia. There are dress shoes, casual shoes, and tennis shoes. The shoes are a metaphor for the life Vanya envisioned for his son—one with walking and running and playing outside. Vlad says he likes the shoes, even though he can never use them; he sees the shoes as a kind of army. The way the shoes are positioned like a fortified wall around Vlad's room supports his notion they are an army. Jasna

remarks that for all of his complaining about Vanya, he certainly seems to like the gifts he brings, and suggests that he let his love for his father flourish. Vlad deflects her by returning to his video game, and she gets angry. She tells Vlad,

> You know what, Vlad: Get a life, start living! Instead of self-pity and stupid suicide attempts, you better get real, take control of your life, prove to your dad that you're strong, that you don't need a nurse! Kill that fucking past of yours, Vlad, bomb your bad memories, murder your fears, murder what holds you back and keeps you from fucking starting your life! Take my advice, Vlady, get real! (28-29)

Jasna's impassioned speech is full of the same kind of violent rhetoric heard earlier from Vlad and Alex. While the circumstances of the scene dictate she is directing her remarks at Vlad, knowing her current circumstances, it may be that she is also speaking to her husband, her son, and herself. She recognizes the need to move on from the horrible past and take advantage of the opportunities that she has in her new country. She is frustrated that Hassan and Alex do not see the same opportunities and their reluctance to move forward is holding her back; she fears what will happen to them as a family and as individuals if they do not move on. Jasna speaks to those who allow fear and anger to stymie them. She boldly asserts that giving in to stereotypes and characterizations imposed upon them by others makes them come true, and strongly and clearly declares that this is not living. Vlad's reaction to Jasna's outburst starts the next scene and his newest blog entry:

> Get real. Get a life. Words. Words. Kill your past. How the fuck can you kill your past? Can you just delete it? Delete. Delete. You have to delete your childhood first. Then you have to erase your birth. How can you erase your birth without killing yourself? Question mark. Thinking. Thinking. Revelation: There's only one way. You have to be up for something big. Really big. Smiley face. (29)

Vlad appears to really be thinking about Jasna's advice, and trying to come up with solutions. His initial questions, about how to go about moving forward, may echo the questions of other Eastern European immigrants they struggle to find their identity in a new home. The end of the entry, where he has his "revelation," the tone gets more ominous. Knowing Vlad and his propensity for hurting himself, in conjunction with killing the past, the text may be foreshadowing another attempt at suicide or something that impacts a greater number of people.

It is also setting up a fundamental problem immigrants may feel they face—how to move on from the past in your new home.

A few days later, on Christmas Eve, Vlad and Irina sit at the kitchen table while Jasna sets it. Christmas music plays in the background and Jasna is doing her best to make the evening festive. Vlad is back to rapping about murder while Irina is silent. An explosion is heard outside the front door and then the bell is rung repeatedly. Jasna runs downstairs to find Alex outside shouting and letting off fireworks. He is clearly disturbed, saying to Jasna,

> There are no more clean socks in the drawer, mom! Once upon a time I had a ma' and a grandma' who'd nag me: no day without changing your socks! Where are my clean socks, mom? I wear dirty ones, I feel like shit when someone looks down at my feet, what if they smell and I can't feel the smell, because I got used with the smell, I'm getting used with [sic] the dirty me while my mom lives in a clean posh house! (30)

Alex is unraveling in Jasna's absence and uses the metaphor of the socks to illustrate to her how she is missed and how different life is now. The metaphor draws Jasna's attention to the difficulty Alex has adjusting to their new life. Alex's actions, setting off fireworks and shouting, is also potentially violent behavior, but Jasna does not see this—she just sees her own culpability in his difficult adjustment.

Jasna introduces Alex to Irina and Vlad and, when Vlad commences rapping, Alex insults him by telling him that the rapper he is quoting, Ja Rule, "is not hot any more, dude. It's cold soup" (30). Vlad calls him a sucker and says he does not know anything and Jasna attempts to bring peace to the room. Jasna's attempt at an old fashioned Christmas Eve dinner is met with scorn by Irina and Alex. Alex accuses his mother of acting like a clown, and Irina says that the evening is cliché. Frustrated, Jasna leaves the group to bring some Christmas dinner to Kebab. In her absence, the trio becomes even more contentious. Vlad raps about dinner, and Alex, who knows that Vlad made up the rap on his own, calls it "stupid stuff" (31). The cultural differences among the group, represented by different ethnicities, nationalities, and socio-economic statuses, come to the surface. They squabble over innocuous matters, antagonize one other, and attempt to assert their own cultural superiority over one another. Vlad and Irina quibble at one another, and Alex defends Irina, which infuriates Vlad. Vlad and Alex begin drinking, and Alex tells them that he "quit" high school. He explains further,

> They gave us this stupid essay assignment. Something political, blah, blah. But also poetic. Blah-blah. I wrote about the last minutes of a woman suicide bomber. I talked about the cold explosives glued to her hot tits. I described in details her fuse-like nipples and combustible belly. The fire inside of her and outside of her. The explosion. The pieces of her flesh flying like decapitated birds. […] It scared the shit out of them. I got detention for three days. I escaped after three hours. (36)

The essay is Alex's fantasy, which is laden with sexual violence. Irina and Vlad compliment the "poetic" nature of Alex's words, and drink to him. According to Denise Roman, who is heavily influenced by Foucault, youth on the threshold of communism and postcommunism (like Vlad and Alex) is "a cultural, transformational, utopia-searching identity bouncing between extremes and between its potential for rebelliousness and society's ideological normalizing tendencies to create 'docile bodies'" (*Fragmented Identities* 56-57). This "bouncing" is evident in the ways Vlad and Alex are easily distracted by their need to outshine one another: to impress Irina, to prove they are more talented, or more violent, or just better than the other. Vlad, Irina and Alex are all part of the same generation (youth), while Jasna, Vanya, Kebab and Hassan make up an older generation. The text clearly establishes differences between these two generations, from their understanding and use of technology to their ability to appreciate the opportunities life has given. The older generation is depicted as less violent and more intellectual, and the younger generation more violent and self-centered. In addition, those in the older generation were raised outside of the United States, while some in the younger generation (Alex, Vlad) were raised primarily in the United States. The violence that Alex and Vlad imagine is focused exclusively on and through women; despite the differences in cultural backgrounds, these two young men both dream of violence.

Irina asks if Alex has ever considered blowing himself up, and he admits it has crossed his mind. He elaborates by telling her that he would not do it because life is pretty good. He talks about how life in other places can be very difficult, but that in America things are generally good. Alex's admission that life in America is pretty good is surprising, considering how vocal he has been about his dissatisfaction. Just recently he complained that he never saw his mother, yet was able to distance his own frustrations from the bigger picture—that in America he is safe and has hope for the future, even though his parents struggle with their new employment. The

conversation continues with Vlad asking Alex and Irina if they want to help him blow Vanya up. Irina is on board, and once Alex hears that he is in the KGB, he agrees. Vlad asks Alex to get the explosives, and Alex claims he can control the bomb well enough that only Vanya will be hurt. They plan to detonate the explosives on New Year's Eve. They sign the deal in blood, as Vlad says,

> Yo! Let our blood be the ink on the contract, let our hands be the paper on which we all sign, today, we all swear today, we, Alex-the Muslim, Irina-the former cheerleader, and Vladimir-the Russian Brain, we are ready to go as far as it takes to give some meaning to this brainwashing life, to kill a piece of Evil as our small good deed for this world, where people should be comrades, but they're not, yo, let the blood witness our bond through silence and MURDA! (42)

The three have been drinking heavily throughout the scene, so it is difficult to ascertain whether or not they are serious. Vlad certainly appears to be the most committed to blowing up his father, but the audience might get the sense that Irina is just playing around and Alex is just agreeing so that he does not look like a wimp. Vlad's earlier plan to do "something big" has been revealed—instead of wanting to hurt himself, he intends to hurt his father. The planning plays on stereotypes the characters hold—because Alex's father, Hassan, is Muslim, Vlad and Irina assume he is also Muslim. In addition, they assume because he is Muslim he must also be violent and an expert with explosives. Alex does not bother to refute their assumptions, making some of his own. He assumes Vanya, because he is Russian and appears to be wealthy, must also really be KGB or work in some other equally sinister organization.[65] Vlad feeds Alex's assumption by whispering about all of the "shady" things Vanya has done. Irina appears to be agreeable to whatever she is told: she believes that Alex must be a terrorist and Muslim, she believes that Vanya's work is in some way illegal, she believes that Vlad is a little crazy as a result of his handicap. The abundant consumption of alcohol has not helped bring clarity to their plan, and all three appear to be operating on partial information. The act ends.

Act Two opens with Vlad, Alex and Irina all on their computers. Vlad is writing a new blog entry about Irina crying in the bathroom, Alex is writing an email to Vlad that he is working on "the THING," and Irina is writing an email to Vanya that she is going to have an abortion

[65] While the KGB as an organization ended in 1991 and was replaced by the FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation), the acronym KGB is more well known. It is possible that Stanescu chose to use this term for how well it would be recognized, not concerning herself with historical accuracy.

(43). Of the three, only Alex seems to be concerned about the pact that they made, while the other two are going about their lives as usual.

Jasna and Kebab meet up outside, and he has a small bush decorated to look like a Christmas tree. Kebab is very excited about his "tree" and he wants Jasna to like it too. Kebab appears to be adapting to the dominant culture; despite the fact that he is homeless, he seems to be attempting to establish a domestic environment for himself. Jasna remembers that she has a gift for Kebab and offers him a pair of shoes. He reacts very strongly to the shoes, saying "no shoes! Kebab bad, Jasna, Kebab bad!" (45). Jasna is confused by Kebab's reaction, and he does not speak English well enough to tell her the entire story, but the gist of it is that he was planning to be a shoe bomber on an airline, but he sat next to a beautiful American grandmother on the plane who was very kind to him and he could not do it. He still considers himself to be bad, despite calling off the mission. Jasna tries to comfort him, telling him that he is not bad and she is his friend (46). The two find solace in one another's company. A few days later, Kebab is wearing shoes and looking up at the sky. He has clearly become Jasna's newest project: she tries to convince him that in order to "start a new life, get a job, normal things that normal people do" he needs to learn English (49). Jasna begins asking Kebab a series of questions, and every one of his answers has "sky" in it. Jasna is losing patience with Kebab, because her plan to rehabilitate him does not appear to be working –he is too fixated on the past. Jasna's need to assist Kebab is almost desperate – born out of her frustration for her own family. She thought that Kebab was a perfect candidate for her help, a blank slate of sorts, but he is not interested in being "fixed." Her failure suggests that sometimes it is not as simple as wanting to "move on," it requires the desire and ability to accept and move forward from the past. In addition, the text indicates that one person cannot force others to move on—the impetus must come from the individual.

Vlad and Alex sit in Vlad's bedroom with a backpack holding the bomb Alex made. They pass a bottle of vodka around and try to act as though there is nothing going on. They are getting drunk, and the nervous energy is obvious. Vlad picks up the backpack and comments about how light it is. Alex admits that he is feeling bad about everything, that he does not even know Vanya, but his mom says he is a decent guy. He confesses that his father wants to return to Sarajevo, and eventually informs Vlad that the "bomb" in the backpack is not real. Vlad is furious with Alex, and the two engage in name-calling and begin to fight. Vlad tries to hit Alex, but he falls down instead. He yells at Alex to get out; as Alex leaves, he hands Vlad a small

clock that was in his pocket and is attached to some explosives. He tells Vlad to connect the red wires and wait ten seconds for detonation. Vlad's next blog entry immediately follows the fight with Alex. In this entry he finally reveals why he uses a wheelchair:

> Volodea is four. His mother walks him to the kindergarten. The main square. A crowd cheering. The big bronze statue of Lenin is pulled down.[66] Cheers! The Father of communism dangling up in the air. His head down. His feet up. Volodea pulls his hand from his mother's. Where are you going, Volodea? He runs to Father Lenin. "Where are you going, Father Lenin?" The crowd freezes. A cracking wail breaks the silence. The first piece of Lenin falls. It's his shoe. Crushing Vlady's legs. Making him a doomed cripple forever…A doomed rich spoiled cripple…DOOMED. RICH. SPOILED. **CRIPPLE**.DOOMED. RICH. SPOILED. **CRIPPLE.** (56)

This recollection is an example of a literal haunting made concrete in the injury that cripples Vlad. He confronts this memory every day as he gets into his wheelchair, and has to make the decision whether or not he can move on. Discovering how Vlad came to be handicapped also helps inform the title of the play. It contextualizes all of the shoes that decorate Vlad's room, and Vanya's gift of shoes upon returning from every trip to Russia. Vlad's repetition of "doomed, rich, spoiled, cripple" suggests that these are phrases he has heard from other people or thought himself. Vlad is literally haunted by the memories of the past every day as he attempts to navigate the world as a disabled person. Even if he wanted to move on, he is incapable of doing so. He peppers the negative "doomed, spoiled, cripple" with what most would consider a positive "rich," however it appears that Vlad does not consider being rich a positive thing. We begin to wonder if he is rich as a result of the accident. Despite the fact that Vlad is now an American citizen, parts of his identity are entirely grounded in Russia and what happened that day. After Vlad's admission, we see Kebab outside looking at the shoes Jasna has given him. He plays with one of the shoes until the heel comes off.

The next scene Jasna is back at her family apartment, looking for Alex. Hassan comments on her dyed hair, but she is focused on finding Alex. Hassan loses his temper, calling her a bad wife and mother, and accusing her of "being" with Vanya. Jasna responds back that it is her job, and throws some of the money she has earned at him. Hassan then tells Jasna that they are going

[66] There are photographs of a statue of Lenin being pulled down in Bucharest on March 5, 1990.

back home to Sarajevo. Jasna reminds him that they moved to the United States so that Alex would have a better life. Hassan is not interested – he misses his old life, his old status. He tells Jasna,

> I am stupid here. And they not understand metaphor. No soul. No imagination. Home you cursed be poet, you cannot change, you born poet, like disease. Here go you college, you are poet! You say I am poet, you are poet! (58)

Clearly Hassan is not adjusting to life in the United States and he is not interested in trying any longer. The change in his lifestyle is too drastic for him and it is not worth it to try to make things better. His outburst also draws our attention to the role the poet has played historically in telling the story of a nation. As a former Poet Laureate in his home country, Hassan would have been recognized for his poetry celebrating the history, culture, and people of the nation. His frustration with his current situation may not only be about how it is affecting him personally, but also how the role of poet is so different. Although we have our own Poet Laureates in the United States, Hassan does not see how his voice fits into the narrative they weave, nor does he see how he fits into the narrative of his new nation. He reminds Jasna that she used to have a "better life" back home too, and now she is "only" a nurse for a handicapped boy. She tells him that she is working on some stories involving immigrants; Jasna claims her personal experience as an immigrant give her a credibility which American writers lack, and that she is sure she will be back to journalism soon. Hassan says that she should wait in the United States for her green card, but that he and Alex are leaving for home.

> JASNA: Home is here.
> HASSAN: This is no home, Jasna. Home is language where you are born.
> JASNA: Home is what you call home. (58)

The debate over the meaning of the word "home" is a recurrent theme in Stanescu's work; we saw it earlier in *Waxing West* too. Stanescu's characters exist in a contested site, trying to negotiate who they are as citizens in exile in the United States. For Hassan, home is the place where people speak the same language he does and understand a collective past. Hassan appears to have left his poetry "at home," so to speak. For Jasna, home can be anywhere, as long as an effort is made at living there, and she is attempting to create a home where she is. This belief is reflected in her accent, which reflects influence from Russia/Romania/Bosnia/Macedonia. These countries are all in close proximity to one another; we know from earlier in this scene that Jasna

and Hassan lived with her family in Romania and they came to the United States from Sarajevo, in Bosnia. Additionally, Jasna may have been influenced by the Soviet presence in Romania as well as her work as a war correspondent in other Eastern bloc countries. Hassan is not convinced that home can be replicated; he warns Jasna that working for Vanya is not good and that bad things will happen. Jasna dismisses his warning and leaves angry.

Hassan tells Alex that Jasna was there, looking for him. Alex dismisses this, and when Hassan tries to engage him in a conversation he loses his temper. Hassan tells him that they are going to move back to Sarajevo, and Alex says he is not going. He then tells Hassan that he made a bomb. Hassan does not seem to hear or understand him, so Alex tells him he wrote a poem. This gets Hassan's attention, and he asks to read the poem. Alex says that he has it memorized, and that it is called "Final Countdown." He recites the poem

TREI, DOI, UNU, ZERO
Another year is waiting
TO DIE
Counting down its last seconds
SINGUR, ALONE
In the middle of the universe
In the middle of the desert
In the middle of the sea
Another crippled sailor
In another tiny boat
AFLOAT
Begging the sky
For a "HOW", for a "WHO", for a "WHY"
Begging the sand
For a land
THREE, TWO, ONE, ZERO
And?

Hassan is proud of Alex and his poem, and unaware that the poem is more literal than metaphorical. The two eat in silence.

Vanya enters Vlad's room, and is relieved that Vlad seems happy and "normal" rather than suicidal. Vlad asks Vanya to tell him what he would do on the last day of his life; Vanya replies by asking why Vlad would want him dead. Vanya spends a little bit of time explaining to Vlad why he did the job he did—to put food on the table for the people he loved, he did a job not because he liked it, but because he just did it and he had no choice. He tells Vlad that everything he did was for Vlad, and Vlad tells him that he hates everything around him. Vlad accuses Vanya of cheating on his mother, making her cry, and making her drink to drown her sorrows. We learn that Vlad's mother died in a car accident when she was driving drunk. Vlad gets so angry at Vanya that he begins picking up the shoes and throwing them at Vanya. He then wheels himself to another shoe, where the heel comes off, and he takes out a microfilm. He does the same to dozens of shoes around his room. Vlad has discovered that Vanya is actually a double agent. Vanya is speechless and impressed by Vlad's discovery. Vlad admits that he thinks of himself as Vanya's Achilles heel, and Vanya says simply, "You are… you, Vlad. My son" (71). Jasna enters the room and sees the microfilm. She begins to read and gets very excited. Vanya offers to let her "share" in the life he has built as a result of what is on the microfilm. She is angry with Vanya because she thinks that he nourished Vlad's agoraphobia and depression, but she recognizes that in her hands she has the making of a great story. Vanya tells her that if she goes to the police with what she has they will ask her questions about her illegal status. She is unmoved by this, and says she is taking the films. Vanya prevents her from leaving the room, and Vlad takes out the detonator that Alex made and holds it on his lap. As he prepares to detonate the bomb, Kebab enters the room with an FBI badge, and handcuffs Vanya. Kebab admits he was an undercover agent, watching Vanya for years. Vlad lifts the bomb above his head and connects the red wires. Kebab and Jasna implore him to stop, but Vanya encourages him. Vlad counts down and the stage goes black. We hear Alex's poem in the blackout and then see a glowing light. The play ends.

Lenin's Shoe focuses on relationships to the past, between generations, and with culture. Stanescu depicts characters who are determined to know and relate to the past, and to understand what they have inherited from it. The characters exist in a contested site, not fully part of their new home, no longer part of their old home. They look at past experiences, relive old memories that haunt them, and attempt to find new identities. Threaded throughout the play is the metaphor of Lenin's shoe, always on the backs of the characters, keeping them down and imbuing them

with violent tendencies. Despite a change in geographical location and regardless of generation, the characters were unable to escape the violence of the lives they experienced at the hands of Lenin or his appointed dictators. Vlad, the most literal of Lenin's victims, is ultimately the one who acts on his violent impulses. Alex's poem foreshadows Vlad's actions, but he chooses to use words to express his feelings rather than actions. Alex rages against his mother, whom he perceives has abandoned him for another boy and another home. In the end, Vlad's actions speak louder than Alex's words; Jasna's death eliminates Alex's opportunity to share his feelings with her and cements his assertion that Jasna has abandoned him.

Lenin's Shoe was produced in 2006 as part of the Bare Bones series by the Lark Play Development Center, running for seven performances. Because of the limited run and minimal production values, the production was not reviewed in New York. As I mentioned earlier, I saw the production in February 2006, sitting in the audience with Stanescu herself. The minimalist approach to the production did not take away from the play's efficacy—if anything, it allowed the audience to focus on the relationships among the characters and the words spoken. Vlad's shoes were arranged as a sort of low barrier between the world of the play and the audience, giving the impression that we could easily cross over into Vlad's world but we may not want to. The explosion at the play's conclusion clearly indicated that Vlad had chosen to punish his father, no matter the cost to anyone else. We were also led to believe that Vlad was not afraid to die, but rather that he saw blowing himself up as a reward—an escape from the life he so hated.

The desire to escape is depicted in each of these plays, albeit in different ways. Elvis and Madona fantasize their escape, using aurolac to help them visualize it. Daniela does physically escape Romania and her life there, but is haunted by memories of her past. Vlad was willing to die to escape the life he led, and willing to kill others in the process. In each of these plays, Stanescu has taken the theme of the American Dream and reframed it from the position of an outsider. For Elvis and Madona in *Aurolac Blues*, America is the place they dream of and hallucinate about in their place on the streets of Bucharest. For these two impoverished children who have never left Romania, their dreams of America help them escape the reality of their daily lives. In *Waxing West*, Daniela leaves Romania to move to America and marry an American man, assuming that all of her troubles will disappear. Instead, Daniela has to confront new issues as she figures out how to make her new life work. Stanescu said of the East Coast Artists 2007 production of *Waxing West* that it

> [i]s my take on the aftermath of the Romanian Revolution in particular and more generally about collective traumas and the ways in which they affect individuals. It's a dramatic but funny meditation on the fact that we cannot just shuffle off our past: we are conditioned by the circumstances of our birth and upbringing. Wherever I go or live, I cannot ultimately escape from Romania; Romania is imprinted in my DNA, distilled in my blood. (indietheatrenow.com)

While Stanescu was speaking about herself and *Waxing West*, much of the same applies to *Lenin's Shoe*. The characters, who struggle for a new notion of "home," are unable to completely leave their previous homes behind. Violence, either remembered or represented, in the form of the Ceauşescus, bombs; references to the Romanian Revolution; the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States; and violent language; plays a significant role in the ways these characters attempt to redefine themselves in their new homes. By drawing on historical and cultural experiences (including the violence indicated above) from the Eastern bloc, especially those experiences pointing to the horrors of life during communism, the plays function as effective tools for haunting.

CHAPTER FIVE

INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY

> We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (Bhabha, 2)

Bhabha's quote, which refers to the moment called the *fin de siècle*,[67] is part of his larger discussion about nations and their existence on the margins. Bhabha's text discusses "moment of transit" at length, specifically how cultures navigate interstices in what he describes as "gatherings" or moments when groups come together in the nations of other people. These gatherings may result in re-telling of histories and experiences, which connects to Carlson's hauntings. Carlson's theory is that this recycling/haunting is an effective way to help people understand what constitutes the nation and their position in said nation, moving them out of the interstices described by Bhabha, and facilitating more effective cultural production. Bhabha's description of gatherings is particularly relevant to this chapter, which examines the ways in which an individual (or a group of individuals) acts in conjunction with or in opposition to society. While Bhabha's gatherings are described as occurring in the nation of other people, the gatherings for these plays may be the audiences (both Western and Romanian) who receive the same material, but respond to it differently. The gatherings may also be represented by the characters in the plays; they are physically located inside the nation of Romania but act outside of acceptable social behaviors.

This chapter will examine the work of Stefan Peca and Gianina Carbunariu, both of whom examine the ways individual and society function in the shaping of national identity. In addition, the playwrights look at the ways young Romanians in particular are affected by their post-communist consumerist society. Both also rely heavily on images from the West, primarily as a means to criticize the Romanian people and their willingness to be so influenced by Western culture. Both utilize Carlson's hauntings by incorporating familiar Romanian iconography, pop culture, and history. These references effectively haunt the text, demonstrating how the text has been constructed to rely on cultural memory to speak to the present. Peca depicts the family in

---

[67] I acknowledge that this term is most commonly used in regard to French artists at the end of the 19th century. Bhabha uses it much more generally, which is what I have also chosen to do.

Romania 21 as representatives of the entire nation, and allows them to tell the story of Romania. Carbunariu chooses three young people as her representatives, focusing on a single generation's perspective of life in Romania today and their dreams for the Romania of the future.

Romania 21

Like Georgescu and Ion from Chapter 2, Peca's and Carbunariu's work emerged from their participation in dramAcum's initiatives.[68] Peca's *Romania 21* premiered at Green Hours in Bucharest, and it was later workshopped at the LARK Play Development Center in New York City. Following productions in the United States and Romania, *Romania 21* was also produced in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Because it was written first in English and then translated to Romanian, I suggest that Peca wrote the play for both Western and Romanian audiences, and assert that his play haunts both. *Romania 21* is a satire in musical form. Peca exaggerates the choices and behaviors of his characters in order to highlight his position on contemporary Romanian culture—that is, that Romania has become too distracted by Western influence. He uses events that are familiar as a way of drawing the audience in, providing an image of Romania that is anything but positive. At the same time he draws the audience in, Peca utilizes Brechtian techniques to allow them to distance themselves from the material. Peca refers to the play's structure as a "snapshot scene" structure; he uses satire, which he introduces through a prologue to the play listing the things he believes most Americans recognize about Romania, including Nadia,[69] selling babies, and Dracula:

> Anyway, the thing is that usually Romania is a misunderstood concept. In your minds it equals Dracula, vampires, incest, communism, Russia, third-world countries. But I can tell you it's more than that. Much more than that. A whole lot more. I won't enumerate right now, but please take my word for it. Nowadays, Romanians have a lot more to be concerned with than Dracula. The new Dracula is called the *transition period*. You see, right after communism fell in 1989, in order to be integrated in the European Union and family, Romania had to go through a transition period, meaning that everyday is new and exciting everything changes and everybody tries to steal as much as they can from their fellow countrymen, and you can't trust shit and you're at risk of getting killed. (111)

[68] See Chapter 1 pages 14-15 for more information.
[69] Comăneci, the Olympic gymnast.

Peca's position on life in Romania during the transition is similar to Stanescu's perspective in *Waxing West*. In general, there appears to be a consensus among the playwrights in this manuscript that once communism fell in Romania, the life that many assumed would get easier in fact became increasingly difficult. By setting up his perspective from the outset, Peca demonstrates for the audience that he is not going to sugar-coat any topic or avoid confronting uncomfortable subject matter. He references historical events that may haunt both Western and Romanian audiences. The moment of transit to which Bhabha refers may literally occur as these two disparate groups listen to Peca's words.

The play follows Ion for more than twenty years—starting with Ceauşescu's reign, through the Revolution and subsequent transition, and finally concluding with Romania's acceptance into the EU. Along the way, Peca holds Ion up as the representative for Romanians during these different periods. Ion describes himself as a "mediocre man" without any desire to succeed (114). He prays to God for a sign that he will be a great man, and God's voice replies, telling him that his job is to make a family and rule Romania. God pacifies Ion by telling him, "don't worry if you don't have any real talents. Untalented people have more time for themselves, they have more time to lead others. You're perfect for leading your country" (115). Peca's criticism of Romania's leaders and their "qualifications" is established.

In the early 1980s, Ion meets the beautiful woman Mio, and the two agree to have sex. Ion discloses that in addition to playing guitar in a local band, he is also a member of the Securitate. Under normal circumstances, an admission that he worked for the Securitate would most likely have met with some hostility, as the Securitate was the security force for Ceauşescu and known for brutality. By making the main character of the play a member of the Securitate, a group that is reminiscent of decades Romanians spent in terror, Peca alienates the Romanian audience from Ion. This alienation serves as a tool for haunting; by preventing the audience from connecting with Ion, they are further haunted by his profession and their memories. Mio and Ion sing about how they will get ahead in life; they will raise Romanian babies and lead the country. Peca sheds some light on life in Romania under communism: it was difficult and scary, there were things that were beyond the control of the average citizen, but the people of Romania continued to live their lives with as much normalcy as they could. Following the song, we see Mio and Ion in a post-coital state, smoking cigarettes and planning the future. The scene

continues with Mio's admission that she thinks she may be pregnant. Despite Ion's earlier declared desire to create a family and rule Romania, he reacts badly to Mio's news saying,

> Nah, you're just saying that! No. NO! WE CANNOT BRING A BABY INTO THIS WORLD, MIO! I mean, Romania is still a communist country! Our future is uncertain! It will take a century to catch up with the economies of the Western countries, the economy of the almighty United States of America!!!! We don't have that kind of economy here! Can't you see we're culturally, socially, and especially economically retarded? Do you want a retarded child? (121)

Ion's outburst is surprising, considering his earlier stance that creating a family would assist him in his plan to rule all of Romania. This section again points to the Western and Romanian audiences Peca intends to address; it seems Ion is complimenting the West and insulting Romania. By comparing Romania to the United States, Peca indicates that he thinks there is a competition among nations (Western vs. non-Western) to be perceived as the best. Peca's reference to this "us" vs. "them" mentality is another example of how the text is haunted by the cultural mentality.

Mio and Ion have a baby boy, to whom they react with some indifference. Both are more concerned with the possibilities the future holds than the realities of the present. They are not particularly attentive toward their son, who at one point crawls off the roof of their building while Mio makes a sandwich. Rather than being horrified that the baby is in danger, Ion is proud of how his son continues to crawl on the terraces below without getting hurt. The boy's tenacity is something Ion considers a good quality, one he does not possess. Ion regrets not having a daughter, and when his son is about four he and Mio try again to have a girl. Immediately after having sex, Mio tells Ion she believes they will have another boy, and Ion is filled with regret. He wonders what is wrong with him that he cannot make a daughter, going so far as to surmise it may have been Chernobyl (124-127). Ion's overwhelming need to have a daughter is not explained; what is clear, however, is that Ion considers himself a failure and unworthy of ruling his country.

Ion and Mio now have two sons and appear to be in worse economic shape than before. The family exists on sardines, and Mio is clearly tired of being poor. Ion tells her hopefully, "Don't be upset, Mio! I've got a feeling 1989 is gonna be a good year" (128). Mio reminds Ion that it is already December of 1989, and he responds, "Don't worry about it, Mio. We'll manage.

Maybe we'll get an unexpected break, any minute now!" (129). After a few seconds, a gunshot is heard from offstage, and Ion exclaims,

> Christ! I think communism just fell! There goes our well-deserved break after fifty years! Finish your dinner, boys! We're going down to the square to get involved in the Romanian Revolution, the bloodiest Revolution in Central and South Eastern Europe. (129)

Ion's dialogue sounds more like someone giving a news report; he tells the facts, but does not insert himself in the situation as it unfolds around him. Mio and Ion have renewed energy and enthusiasm as they discover that Romania is now "free." They launch into song, proclaiming

> Corruption
> Is free, so free, so free
> Stealing is now free
> Money is now free
> We're free so free
> We're so fucking free
> Romania is free to believe anything it wants to believe
> Romania is free to believe everything it wants to believe
> Romania is up for sale
> Romania is up for sale (130)

The play uses historical events to highlight the belief that the end of communism did not signal the end of difficult times in Romania. The beginning lyrics refer back to Peca's prologue, in which he described the period following the end of communism, called the Transition. The play criticizes Romanians for their behavior following the Revolution, asserting that they embraced their freedom by going to every imaginable extreme. The remaining lyrics point to the nation's new status as a free market economy; the lyrics both celebrate and complicate this new status. The play acknowledges that with capitalism comes the ability to do things that were not possible under communism, but at the same time this new status comes with a price. Romania, according to the play, is now susceptible ("up for sale") to the influence of money and freedom that Western nations wield. According to Alan Smith's essay "The Transition to a Market Economy in Romania and the Competitiveness of Exports", a decade after the Revolution, Romania was "facing its deepest economic crisis since the collapse of communism" (*Post-Communist*

Romania 127). The play's lyrics, delivered by Ion at the start of the Transition period but written by Peca more than a decade after this period, are both prophetic and omniscient—Peca knows how Romanians handled their freedom and how their actions affected their success. Not all of the threat to Romania comes from the West, however. Peca's lyrics may also be a warning to the people of Romania ("free to believe anything it wants to believe") that they should not allow freedom to hinder their judgment about outside leadership, either. According to Professor of Ethnic Peace and Conflict Dr. Tom Gallagher in his essay "Nationalism and Romanian Political Culture in the 1990s," the Transition period resulted in a serious fracture between the elite and the ruling government, which resulted in a consensus between society and the political elite that "Romania's only guaranteed road to recovery lay through aligning with the West" (*Post-Communist Romania* 107). Considering this evidence, the play is clearly calling attention to Romania's past mistakes.

Ion and Mio are more than happy to dive headfirst into a capitalist lifestyle complete with bringing home a big-screen television that he refers to as "your new babysitter" (130). Their transition into capitalism continues, as they sing the next song, "Selling Babies" (131). Following the fall of Romanian Revolution and the fall of communism, Romanians came under fire from the global community, especially the EU, for the high incidence of international adoptions. After communism fell, many Westerners instigated adoption proceedings for babies and children in Romanian orphanages. The increase in international adoptions triggered an investigation, which resulted in the discovery that that Romanian women, who were forbidden from using birth control under Ceaușescu, realized that they could sell their unborn children to families in the West. The concern was that women were intentionally getting pregnant in order to make money, and international adoptions were stopped. By satirizing the controversy through song (lyrics include "We're selling babies, Romania's getting better"), Peca continues to draw the audience's attention to the reality of life in Romania, while also drawing attention to the fact that the criticisms that have been launched against Romania are from the West.

Five years pass between scenes and it is now the mid-nineties. Ion and Mio's sons, Theo and Vic, sit in front of the big-screen television watching a show broadcast in Romanian. Vic, the youngest, is wearing lipstick and a negligee. Ion says he is pleased they have learned Romanian; Vic tells him they have been taking private lessons. The implication here is that Romanian is no longer the language of choice for young people. Indeed, most Romanian schools

teach English and French in addition to Romanian, and many Romanians, especially the younger generation, speak English fluently.[70] My own experience, detailed in the Introduction, indicates that the people of Romania do not consider their native language to be of much use in the global community. Ion continues, telling his boys that he has become a Senator and that his dreams are coming true. When queried by his sons about the family's future, Ion is quick to clarify that any wealth or power associated with his new position is for him only. His dream to rule the country on track, Ion reveals that he has a new dream: to be King of Romania.[71] He is no longer content to rule as part of a democratic system, which is what Romania established after communism. After sharing his plans with his sons, Ion begins a conversation with them. He wonders aloud at Vic's appearance, but Vic ignores him. Theo quickly attempts to get rid of Ion, asking him why he is not off fulfilling his duties as a senator. Ion's reply – "we only have to show up at election time and for lunch. There's not a lot to be done anyway. We get bored and resort to stealing." – reinforces Peca's earlier criticism that the Romanian government during the Transition was rife with corruption (135). By bringing up salient topics like corruption, the relevance of the Romanian language, and lack of knowledge about the government, Peca's text demonstrates how cultural memory of the past continues to haunt the present. The Romanian audience is forced to relive their memories of the Transition and the difficulties the nation had to address and overcome to achieve stability. A Western audience may become aware of the anxiety and subsequent relief felt during and after communism, and the role Western nations have played in helping shape formerly communist nations.

By raising issues that are relevant for both intended audiences, the play attempts two things: to push Romanians out of the "moment of transit" they occupy and to force the West to acknowledge their contribution (positive or negative) in the shaping of the global community. The gathering of these two groups and the information they receive from Peca may result in affirmative action—Romanians using historical events and experiences to reshape the way they perceive their place in the global community, and Westerners gaining an understanding for the experiences Romanians have had and what role Westerners play in helping re-shape global understanding of Romania.

---

[70] According to a 2008 study by The Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) titled "Key Data on Teaching Languages at Schools in Europe".

[71] According to Boia, there has not been a king of Romania since 1947, when King Michael was forced to abdicate at the hands of the newly elected communist party Romanian People's Republic (115).

Ion and Mio, who appear not to have seen one another for several years, reunite. Ion tells Mio he has been named a senator; he says he was chosen for his "commitment to the baby-selling industry," and that he has been given the president's blessing (139). The reference to baby selling is incendiary. By bringing up this issue, the play calls the audience's attention the corruption that was prevalent in Romania, not just in the government. It also highlights the great lengths Romanians went to for survival. Additionally, it subtly acknowledges the culpability of the West in the scandal; as the demand for babies rose, Romanians chose to increase the supply. The audience hears the sound of a baby crying, and Mio announces that she has given birth to a girl. This announcement leads Ion to break into song, "A Daughter is Born." The baby girl is named Fifi, and Ion promises to pledge his entire life to her happiness. For the first time, the play presents a side of Ion that has heretofore been invisible. He has no qualms about selling the babies of his fellow Romanians, who ostensibly do not want them, but he is genuinely thrilled by the newest addition to his own family. He appears to be on the cusp of a major life change as a result of this new happiness (142).

Unfortunately, Ion's "transformation" is short-lived. The text draws a parallel between Ion's enthusiasm for a new life now that he has a baby girl and the exuberance experienced in Romania at the fall of communism—the promise of something new and the hope that comes with positive change. Similarly, the pledge to make changes and correct past mistakes common in both Ion and Romania was short-lived, as both quickly turned to corruption and old habits, including electing leaders who were members of the old communist party, marginalizing minority populations, and other previously discussed examples of corruption. Ion sits with Fifi on his chest, talking to Vic. He begins by apologizing for his behavior in the past. Peca has positioned this family as metaphor for the "new" Romanian identity; Ion represents the old face of Romania and his sons, especially Vic, represent the new Romanian identity.[72] Ion demonstrates a commitment to his government and country that he cannot make to his biological family. His loyalty clearly belongs to his country, which is privileged above all else. The positions of these two members of the family and the ways the text positions them to represent

[72] Peca includes a scene in the play in which Vic is dressed as a woman and admits to having sexual feelings for other men. Homosexuality is a sensitive subject in Romania; sexual acts between same-sex adults in private were legalized in 1996. However, it was not until 2000 that Article 200, which criminalized public manifestations of homosexuality, was repealed after pressure from the European Union. The LGBT community and Human Rights groups continue to work against the prejudice that is part of Romania's history (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission).

Romania are reminiscent of the Bhabha quote, where complex figures of difference and identity come together. In this instance, these two signify disparate lives in the new Romania. Although it initially appears as though Ion and Vic are on their way to improving their relationship, Vic gets frustrated when Ion begins asking him questions that he should know as Vic's father (143-145).

Vic goes to his room to pack his belongings. As he does so he sings a song with the following chorus:

> In Romania birth is a burial process
> In Romania two steps back means progress
> In Romania I don't even try to know
> In Romania the best thing to do is pack and go (146)

Vic's disdain for his nation echoes Peca's. Peca juxtaposes positive life events (birth, progress) with negative ones (burial, two steps back). He appears to be indicating that no matter what efforts are made by the Romanian people, they are unable to effect real change. By the end of the song, Vic has replaced the ballet dress he was wearing with a military uniform. This change to a uniform may suggest that Vic is choosing to play a role that is more socially acceptable. Vic's choice to join the military and assimilate enforces the nation's (conservative rather than flamboyant) idea of its identity. By removing the dress and substituting it with a sharply contrasting uniform, the text suggests a re-visitation of all associations with military dress. In Romania, the uniform may evoke memories of the Securitate or the Romanian Army; prior to the late 1980s, the military was very closely aligned with Ceauşescu and known for being as violent as the Securitate (Roper 57-58). Ion mentioned early in the play that he worked for the Securitate, so the Romanian audience may already be thinking about those men; the visual reminder of Vic in the military uniform, coupled with the earlier reference and the song lyrics, are examples of what Carlson has identified as ghosting,

> [a]ny theatrical production weaves a ghostly tapestry for its audience, playing in various degrees and combinations that that audience's collective and individual memories of previous experience with this play, this director, these actors, *this story*, this theatrical space, even, on occasion, with this scenery, *these costumes*, these properties. (165 emphasis mine)

Peca uses historical references that may still be very present for the Romanian audience; by using visual cues that evoke such strong emotions, the text reinforces Bhabha's assertion that

identity is always marked by the past, whether the Securitate uniform or Ion's inability to connect to his family on any meaningful level.

Time quickly passes, and Fifi is now a young teenager. She complains to Ion that she has the reputation of being a whore and the daughter of a corrupt politician. Ion's response is to tell her he will make a few calls and the people who called her names will pay. She tells him that she sleeps with older men for money and he says she is just like her mother. Despite the fact that at this point in the play Romania is in the Transition period and has theoretically progressed beyond the lives the people led during communism, the text suggests that the oft-discussed "progress" really hasn't happened for many people. Fifi's choices mirror the ones her mother made nearly thirty years earlier. The characters are depicted more like caricatures than real people. Peca's satirical style employs broad strokes in depicting the characters, who generally fall into stereotypes developed by outsiders. By framing the more significant issues like identity with satire, Peca pushes the audience to reevaluate their own beliefs.

Fifi leaves with her Western boyfriend, a producer and agent who promised to make her a star. Ion bemoans her departure, and Mio accuses him of having an inappropriate relationship with his daughter. The next time we see Fifi, she is practicing a television interview with an imaginary camera. Like her other family members, her view of herself and the world is somewhat distorted. She maintains her "hotness," suggests that anyone who wants to be in entertainment should go into pornography, and denies that she is Ion's daughter. Like her brother Vic, Fifi attempts to distance herself from her family in favor of finding her own identity. Fifi is also a metaphor for the new Romanian identity Peca depicts; the song she sings indicates how she was influenced by the environment in which she was raised and her belief that money and power trump everything else. Fifi is not satisfied with what she already has; she wants more and more and more, not concerning herself with whether or not something is morally sound. Gallagher asserts that the years following the 1989 Revolution and the Transition period resulted in widespread corruption among politicians and average citizens who were faced with freedoms they had not experienced before. The newfound ability to make choices resulted in choices that were illegal and immoral, especially by those in power. Even now, more than twenty years after the end of communism and since Romania gained entry into the EU, Gallagher reports that politicians are reported of corruption and rampant greed (107-110).

Immediately on the heels of Fifi's song, we learn that Ion's party has won the election and he is now Prime Minister of Romania. In effect, his lifelong dream has come true. Theo joins in his father's celebration, and then immediately asks him to wield his power to get Theo what he wants. Theo is in legal trouble, having been arrested for drug-running and child pornography. Ion offers to do whatever he can to help Theo, and Theo takes his request further. He launches into his own song, "One Day." The song details Theo's various dreams for his future, all of which center around power, wealth, and "screwing" someone over. At the song's conclusion, Ion embraces his son, full of pride that he is following in his father's footsteps (154).

However, the euphoria between Ion and Theo is short lived as Mio enters and tells them that Fifi is dead. She was involved in pornography and died during the filming of a snuff film. Fifi's death sends Mio into a deep depression; she is committed to a sanitarium and Theo gets the baby-selling business he has wanted for years. The day Fifi dies something in Ion dies too. He no longer cares about pursuing his dreams, and proceeds on autopilot to repeat the same acts of corruption and questionable morality. After some time, Ion turns to God to help him. He pleads for God's help, saying that he built the family he was supposed to but failed them all. God (in a voiceover, according to the script) tells him that the only way to fix things is to "integrate."

> Until now, you have dreamed about a united family and did everything in your power to make that dream come true. You tried too hard. You hurt too many people! That's why it fell apart! My son, you have always forgotten the fact that your country *is* your family…you have to integrate your family-Romania-into a bigger family-Europe! You have to be united with the European Union! Otherwise you'll be the laughing stock of the continent! (156-157)

Peca uses this family, with their different actions and desires, to tell the story of the nation. He positions this family as the representatives for all Romanians. The voice of God serves as the literal *deus ex machina*, telling the characters that if they expect to move beyond their past they need to integrate with the rest of the European community. The "integration" spoken of is a topic of much debate among Romanians and others. For Romania to survive, some argued that joining the EU was the only viable option. [73] Even after joining the EU (2007), the debate between the benefits of joining the "global community" and the concern that Romania's identity will be "lost

[73] Including Pace University Assistant Professor of Political Science Dr. Steven Roper, whose book *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution* focuses on Romania's politics and economy following the revolution, and proposes opportunities for the country as the twenty-first century looms.

in the shuffle" continues.[74] By using an already known narrative, Peca invites Western and Romanian audience members to consider their own positions in relation to the argument for/against Romania as part of the global community.

Ion realizes that the only way to protect Romania is to join the EU. He recruits Vic, newly arrived from serving in the Romanian Army in Iraq,[75] to help him. Ion is committed to securing Romania's entrance into the EU, and informs Vic that the European evaluation committee is coming to Bucharest. Ion's plan is to use prostitutes and alcohol to convince the members of the evaluation committee that Romania deserves to be accepted into the EU. Ion and Vic then sing a song about integration claiming, "we will integrate completely gladly inside Europe we'll step so proudly" (160). The men essentially indicate that assimilation into Europe is the answer to all of Romania's problems, a feeling shared by some in Romania.[76] The play contributes to the ongoing controversy and discussions that are happening in academic journals, among citizens, and in newspapers, effectively drawing attention to Romania's status as a contested site. Since the 1989 Revolution, numerous scholars have written articles and essays claiming that Romania continues to be corrupt,[77] and misses opportunities for growth and change. At the same time, additional criticisms suggest Romania has abandoned its own historical heritage in favor of following what EU member states do.[78]

Next is a monologue delivered by the President of Romania, but written by Ion. The monologue, while recognizable as English, evokes stereotypes of a Romanian accent. The President addresses the European commission, assuring them that Romania is free of the corruption they have been accused of in the past, and is committed to what he refers to as "the European structures." He elaborates that Romania supports the united forces of Europe and has dedicated itself to prevent corruption at the level of European structures (161).[79] The President pledges Romania's readiness to join the EU and welcomes the commission to Bucharest. Ion then welcomes the commission, singling out certain members and offering to help them "relax"

---

[74] Specifically noted Romanian and historian Lucian Boia, whose books *Romania* and *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* examine Romanian national identity and advocate for maintaining a strong Romanian identity—not automatically bending to Western influence.
[75] Based on the play's timeline, Vic appears to return to Romania in 2006.
[76] Anecdotal evidence based on personal conversations I had with Romanians while in Romania in 2004.
[77] See, for example, *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, Volume 11, Number 1 (2008). The volume is called "Governance and Corruption."
[78] Journals including *West European Politics*, *Comparative Education, Comparative European Politics.*
[79] "European structures" is a term used to describe EU member nations and the models they have created for governance, education, rights, etc.

in exchange for their help getting Romania into the EU. Ion's idea of relaxation is to bring in prostitutes and to try to convince the commissioner that they are folklore singers who will demonstrate that Romania deserves to be in the EU. "Forget about economy, politics, culture, society! We got soul, commissioner!" (162). The scene ends with the company all getting into a giant bed together, driving home Peca's assertion that Romania gained entry into the EU by prostituting itself.

The final scene of the play is a last visit from God (as indicated by a voice), who informs the characters that the European Parliament has ratified Romania's entrance into the EU (January 1, 2007). He then informs Ion that his work on earth is done, as he helped ensure Romania's future. One by one, the actors ascend into the sky, while singing "Kumbaya."[80] A giant European Union flag with Romania at the center descends from "heaven" as the cast sings. The last song cautions the audience against making the same choices that the characters did,

> Don't sell your ass for nothing,
> put it up for real work,
> there's a lot of work to do to stop being a jerk,
> in my Romania (166-167).

By ending the play with the characters' ascension into Heaven, having lived up to God's plan by gaining entrance into the EU, the text continues to satirize the idea that being in the EU will bring only happiness and prosperity to the people of Romania. This perspective is complicated when the audience is implored not to sell out their identity just for the sake of belonging. By using this family to represent Romania and by highlighting the issues they have confronted, Peca appears to be alluding to potential consequences that the Romanian people face if they abandon their individual and collective identities to appease others. The text recalls Romania's status as a contested site—as a literal place, Romania that is contested historically and internally; externally, Romania's relationship to the West is contested by Romanians and the West.

Peca uses satiric criticism to address Romania's contested status and propensity to be led by outsiders. He does not shy away from insulting the choices made by his fellow Romanians, perhaps intending to make the audience uncomfortable. In the not-too-distant past, Romanians who criticized the government were picked up by the Securitate and punished, and sometimes

[80] The song, which most likely originates with former African slaves living off the coast of South Carolina, is most commonly linked to American folk singers Joan Baez and Peter, Paul, and Mary.

never seen again. By recycling feelings of fear and evoking bad memories, Peca seems to address both Romanians in general and this Romanian family, pointing to their position in Bhabha's "moment of transit."

Stop the Tempo

Ginanina Carbunariu's *Stop the Tempo* is told from the perspective of three twenty-something Romanians. The play's structure switches between monologues and overlapping dialogue, and the characters frequently address the audience directly. The pacing of the show (tempo) is rapid—Carbunariu wastes no time setting up the stakes or her message from the beginning, which helps propel the action forward and makes the title that much more significant. The three characters are self-centered, materialistic hedonists. They are not interested in anything other than their own enjoyment, which they discover comes as a result of putting themselves and others into danger. Carbunariu mixes her own frustrations with her country into the play, highlighting Romanian theatre, reality television, and Romania's unwillingness to move forward in any meaningful way. She paints her picture using broad strokes, rarely acknowledging anything positive about Romania or its history. The play's ending implies that while Carbunariu is frustrated with her country's current state, she is not giving up on its potential for the future (35). In an April 2010 interview with Romanian theatre critic Ioana Moldovan for "Critical Stages," the IATC web journal,[81] Carbunariu said in regard to the creation of the theatrical organization dramAcum,

> We felt that the stage is exactly the right place [...] for artists and audience to meet and reflect on what's going on around them. After 8 years now, I think that the younger generation of Romanian playwrights and directors are more interested in seeing deeper and in addressing onstage major issues which they face in their everyday lives. But there are still themes that are taboo. It's not about direct political censorship anymore, but about our ignorance and indifference that fail us in recognizing a problem that should be staged for a public, accurate and honest discussion [...]

In an earlier interview with Gwen Orel,[82] Carbunariu said of herself and her fellow Romanian playwrights, "We are looking for the important themes of Romanian reality. It's time for our

[81] International Association of Theatre Critics.
[82] July 2006.

generation to take some responsibility. During communist times, everything was metaphorical. Now we have this need to make a connection with reality" (*New York Times).*

Including iconography easily recognizable by a younger generation is one way the play specifically addresses this audience. Carbunariu's quote emphasizes the importance she has placed on the role the younger generation plays in helping Romania move through Bhabha's "moment of transit." The characters in the play are representative of Bhabha's gatherings, acting together in opposition to the majority. The characters' actions disregard and even reject the influence the past has on shaping identity, as they attempt to redefine themselves as independent from their nation—past and present. The text is haunted by the characters' dream of the future Romania and their inability to move out of the present reality.

Stop the Tempo was written in Romanian and, as indicated by Carbunariu, intended for a young Romanian audience. Its subsequent translation into English, German, French, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and Spanish suggests that the play resonates with younger audiences in many different nations. The play received its World Premiere in 2003 at the Green Hours in Bucharest,[83] and its English-language premiere at the Royal Court Theatre in 2007. Carbunariu is known primarily for her work as a director, and several of the playwrights I interviewed listed her as a Romanian theatre artist they admire. Her contributions to theatre in Romania since the fall of communism, most notably the path she has helped pave for young playwrights, have not gone unacknowledged. Carbunariu earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Theatre Department of the National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, is a founding member of the group dramAcum, and studied at the Royal Court Theatre in London. *Stop the Tempo* has received both readings and full-scale productions in France, Poland, New York, Prague, and Dublin. In 2004 *Stop the Tempo* won the award for Best Production by the Romanian newspaper *Cotidianul* for the production at the Green Hours (Gerould 2-4).

Carbunariu starts the play off in a Romanian nightclub—a location that is likely very familiar to the younger generation. By putting the opening scene of the play in a place that is familiar, Carbunariu haunts the members of her audience that are part of the younger generation. According to Carlson's chapter "The Haunted House,"

[83] For additional information about the Green Hours Club and its significance for contemporary Romanian theatre, see Chapter 2.

> Theorists of tourism have often noted that physical locations, like individual human beings, can by the operations of fame be so deeply implanted in the consciousness of a culture that individuals in that culture, actually encountering them for the first time, inevitably find that experience already haunted by the cultural construction of these persons and places. (135)

By setting so much of the play in these "deeply implanted" locations, the play may be suggesting that this familiar place, a site of frivolity and social engagement, is itself contested. Carlson suggests that it is necessary for these locations to be specific—it is possible that by virtue of their similarities (music, dancing, drinking, socialization), any nightclub is imbued with the same weight as a location that is more historically important. On the surface, a nightclub appears to be a casual meeting ground, a place for social networking and relaxation. In the world Carbunariu has created, however, it appears this casual spot may actually be the site for deep-seated frustration and resentment. Each of the characters reveals something that has pushed them toward the choices they make during the course of the play. Maria informs us that she works three jobs, hoping that she will be able to get "a place of my own. A cute little apartment. Cute little husband. Cute little kid. Cute little car." She has recently begun dating her gynecologist, despite suspecting that he is married, and is embarrassed that he speaks English to her that she cannot understand. They arrange to meet up later that evening (6). Rolando, a deejay, confesses his fear that he is not getting jobs anymore because he is no longer "cool." He admits that the girl he was recently dating broke up with him because she only likes deejays who are working, and he is determined to go somewhere to learn how to regain his cool (8). From Paula we mostly hear profanity, but toward the end of the first scene we learn that she is a lesbian who has recently been dumped (9). The three make separate plans to go to a club called "Space."

They are all uncomfortable in the club, and they each make comments about the people around them.

> ROLANDO (referring to Maria and Paula): Right near these two weird-looking chicks kinda creepy and bored…
>
> PAULA (referring to Rolando and Maria): Next to some boring losers, dull as dishwater…
>
> MARIA (referring to Rolando and Paula): Next to a couple of regulars, bored and *very* cool…(10)

As they prepare to leave the club, all three receive phone calls. None of them is particularly thrilled to speak with the person on the other end; each makes up a story to quickly get off the line, claiming that she/he is with the other two. Rolando's conversation in particular gets the women's attention, "Yeah, I'm in Space. No, not alone, I'm actually with two super-cunts and I'm gonna fuck their brains out all night long" (11). Upon hanging up, Maria asks Rolando if what he said on the phone was true; his reply, in the affirmative, puts the relationship in motion.

The following scene begins with each of the three expressing some regret at how quickly they agreed to leave together. They all seem slightly confused by how they have gotten into this situation – leaving the club together, ostensibly to have sex. Maria and Rolando refer to it as "pure madness" and a "ridiculous situation" respectively (12). Yet neither calls things off. Instead, the three get into Maria's car and begin driving around Bucharest. Paula keeps looking at Maria and Rolando's shoes, noting that they are from the UK and clearly expensive. She is obsessed with the shoes, which makes Rolando uncomfortable. He concludes that she must be looking at them and thinking how "cool" he is. Paula and Rolando begin having sex in the backseat while Maria drives. Their sex sounds violent, and at times it is unclear to Maria and the audience whether they are hitting one another or having sex, as the stage directions indicate the only lighting is flashlights held by the actors.[84] There is no dialogue, and when they have finished Maria and Rolando change places and the two women couple in the back while he drives. Maria does not respond well to the physical contact and gets violently ill. Paula attempts to have Rolando stop the car to help, but Rolando is distracted by what is happening and crashes the car (13-14).

The violence of the sex is echoed in the violence of the crash. The play depicts the characters' actions as knee-jerk reactions to feelings of anger, frustration, and loneliness. Instead of finding comfort or even pleasure in their choices, the couplings leave the three literally bruised, battered, and sick. The play suggests these three characters are representative of a group of Romanians who make impulsive, immature decisions, acting impulsively and paying for their lack of foresight, sometimes with their physical health, sometimes with their emotional health. This group is "in transit."

[84] According to an interview with Carbunariu in the British newspaper *The Independent*, "The fact we were using flashlights criticised the institutional theatres that can put on big productions that say nothing" (Cripps 2007).

Following the crash, one by one the characters reveal to the audience their feelings about what happened that evening. Maria begins by talking about the financial loss of her car and how she will have to work even harder to pay for a new one. She downplays the crash itself, claiming it was "no big deal, really" (15). Rolando, on the other hand, cannot stop talking about how happy he was following the crash. He believes that meeting Paula and Maria may have been some sort of sign in his life. He is not sure what that sign may be, but feels optimistic nonetheless. Maria echoes Rolando's sentiment, claiming that she felt joy following the evening she shared with the two strangers, and continued to feel joyful after she was fired from her job. It was not the sex, but perhaps the connection she felt among the three. Paula admits that she is eager to meet up with Maria and Rolando again. So each one of the three heads back to the club where they met, hoping to reunite.

Paula is already waiting at the bar when Maria arrives, and the two sit in silence, without even a greeting, while they wait for Rolando. Before he arrives, both Maria and Paula share with the audience how annoyed they are by the other patrons; their annoyance sounds suspiciously like jealousy, as they rail against the "easy lives, easy, smiles" surrounding them (16). Rolando arrives, and all three characters begin raving about the people surrounding them:

> MARIA: It was strange, the way we just stood there, still. All three of us. And all those 'vacant'…
>
> PAULA: With their shitty DJ…
>
> ROLANDO: All those 'connected'…
>
> MARIA: With their special 'scene'…
>
> ROLANDO: All the 'elite'…all those 'ultra hip,' all those fucking 'Made in Europe,' all those bottled water-drinking bastards!! (16).

The rancor with which these characters deride their fellow club-goers is somewhat jarring. Their sheer inability to connect with one another on any meaningful level is apparent, as is their dislike of anyone who appears to be having fun. The anger with which they refer to "made in Europe" is particularly meaningful, as up to this point many of the things they claim to enjoy (sex, nightclubs, shoes, cars, etc.) are connected to Europe. The play speaks to the development of national identity; these three characters openly deride European influence, but are unable to see their own hypocrisy: they openly enjoy the very things they disparage in others. Their palpable

desire for something different, something else, is a kind of haunting.[85] Older members of the audience will recall the period during communism when they longed for a different life, but were largely unable to act upon those desires. For younger audience members, the restlessness and need to explore new things for "fun" may be familiar. Without speaking, Paula encourages Rolando and Maria to follow her in pursuit of "fun," leading them down a flight of stairs, looking for something. She finds what she is seeking, the master power switch, and turns it off. Maria screams.

Paula's need for something fun wreaks havoc in the club, resulting in a panicked stampede. Maria and Rolando are furious with Paula, who claims she did not know that the club-goers would panic. Their anger and fear quickly turn to excitement and titillation, as Rolando "violently" kisses Paula, and the three load batteries into flashlights in the manner of loading bullets into guns. They begin visiting two clubs a night, turning off the power, and getting a rush off the fear and panic they instill in everyone else. Maria admits that she quit her second job so that she would be "fresh for the night shift," and Rolando reveals that there is a bigger buzz if they witness the onset of the panic. In an effort to maximize the rush, they take turns staying on the dance floor: two go to turn off the power and one stays to watch. They also begin to visit supermarkets for the same effect. There is little interaction among them; instead they choose to focus their energies on the task at hand and the rush they get from inciting panic.

The periodic Western references, like "cute little McDonald's! Let's scare the McShit out of them!" indicate the influence the West plays in Romania, and the ways in which some Romanians resent those influences (19). By paralleling the characters' sense of disconnection from society with their desire to literally disconnect the very people they disdain, the play criticizes the tendency Romanians have of misdirecting their feelings of frustration and anger toward one another. Paula informs the audience,

> Sometimes I think that the whole disconnecting idea was already out there. Seriously. Everywhere you go, it's all around you: "get in the loop," "get plugged in," "click here," "send a text," "join the big fucking party." All day long, on and on. Until something in you snaps and you say, "Take your connections and shove

[85] This may not fit into Carlson's definition, but I believe these characters are haunted by their dreams of what could be, which is also relevant.

them up your hole. I'm too fucking connected. I'm too fucking turned on. What if I just fucking turn off?"(19-20)

This section openly criticizes the propensity of the younger generation to be constantly accessible, or connected. Capitalism and these "needs" to be connected, keep up, have more stuff is also criticized, first by Maria and then by Paula.

> MARIA: The reason I got three jobs was…well, my parents wouldn't like a loser living in the house. They wanted me to be a big success, you know, like that… "Rexona" ultra-dry pits twenty-five hours a day. The breadwinner. For fucks sake, the more I brought in the higher their standards: wide-screen TV, flat screen TV, plasma TV and a fridge that shits ice-cubes! Only the latest models. I can't bear to go home in the evening and find out what other shit they've seen in some stupid ad. Shit they don't need but that they'd kill to get. I love them, yeah, I do but…but sometimes…yeah, sometimes I feel like gouging their fucking eyes out. (20)

Maria's comments indicate that her parents have imposed their own agenda and expectations (success) on her; she works to meet their expectations, but she is full of resentment for how much emphasis they have placed on material goods. Similarly, Paula expresses frustration and anger over the emphasis Romanians place on making the right impression via what they possess:

> PAULA: Three years ago I got a job at an advertising agency – I mean – consultancy. So I've been a creative director, brand manager, executive creative artistic director assistant manager senior manager group chief executive artistic creative director WHATEVER…I couldn't take it anymore. For three years I had been "selling" the clean, dry, protective, sensational mother; the wrinkle-free mother; the dandruff-free mother; the orgasm shampoo mother; the terrorizing her husband for a piece of chocolate mother; the firm-breasted mother; the carefree mother; the zero-percent-interest mother; the food dancing around the kitchen mother; the doesn't have a thing to do mother; the I'm fucking Mr. Proper mother; la la la la la la la la la la la la! The mother, the mother sells! (20-21)

As Ion and his family did *Romania 21,* Maria's parents represent the older generation of Romanians. She accuses the entire generation of falling prey to the capitalist tendency of using possessions as a measure of success and she indicts the pressure that places on the younger

generation to meet their needs. The play's criticism of the capitalist tendency to want what is bigger, better, and newer echoes claims made in the plays I have already examined. There is an agreement that certain factions of society (in this case, a subset of Romanians) have become self-centered and removed from the issues that really matter. Carbunariu's earlier quote calls on the younger generation to "take some responsibility" for the choices that have been made and to come together to envision the nation's future.

Arguably the most overt criticism comes next, as the characters parody patriotic poems that many Romanians would remember from life during communism.[86] These poems, which are part of the culture Romanian youth and young adults have inherited, serve to now haunt the present. The lead into this section of the play comes with Rolando's statement, "If all of Romania was connected to one massive switchboard, I'd find it and blow the shit out it" (21). The actors begin humming the Romanian national anthem and then take turns reciting their "poetry." While they each take turns deriding Romanian history, Maria's words are particularly cutting:

> Fat slaves; cocooned in silk
> Their mistakes hidden in a Gestapo file
> Pig-brained; living in palaces
> Drunk with success
> Wallowing in luxury and excess
> Nobody can touch them but God. (22)

These comments appear to be directed at those Romanian government officials who benefited the most during communism and the Transition. As I have already mentioned, prior to entrance into the EU, Romanian officials had to address and make plans to put an end to the corruption that plagued the nation. Many in Romania, Carbunariu included, believe that there is still a group of powerful individuals who live richly without hard work or penalty, while the rest of the country works hard to enjoy small luxuries.[87]

Maria, Paula and Rolando's level of frustration is growing. The text suggests that they are upset that their behavior has not "cured" the abuses they perceive. Instead, their generation's love of indulgence, money, and good times allows the abuse to continue. They are at the point

---

[86] Carbunariu indicates in the stage directions that these are patriotic poems and that the characters are parodying them.
[87] Like going to nightclubs.

that they are returning to the same clubs repeatedly, risking being caught by someone who connects their presence with the loss of electricity. In order to find a new source of entertainment, Paula proposes they find a way to "pull the plug" on the local television stations. Maria suggests they wait until Andreea Marin's show is on; [88] Maria explains to the others that she wants to disrupt Marin's show because, "every time we watch that stupid bitch with her perfect hair interviewing some sad fucker, my mom tells me to take her as an example" (24). Characters in *Stop the Tempo* and Vera Ion's *Vitamins* reference Marin and the role she plays in Romanian popular culture. A key difference in how Marin is referenced is generational—in *Vitamins* the older generation is enamored of her, while Maria in *Stop the Tempo* voices a negative opinion about Marin and her fellow reality television "stars," blaming them for contributing to the "me" mentality pervasive in their country.

Rolando counters Paula's plan of shutting down television stations by suggesting they hit a theatre instead. He attended the theatre with an ex-girlfriend who insisted the theatre was "reeeally iiinteresting" and he found the entire evening to be "unbearable." He aspires to get back at the snobs who run and attend the theatres. He cites a newspaper article in which Romanian director Theo Herghelegiu writes to the Minister of Culture about the pervasive censorship and control wielded by the government in respect to what the theatres are able to produce. Rolando's attitude indicates that these characters' agenda is to punish those they perceive as "elite." The play connects back to Carbunariu's earlier quotes, where she indicated that she believes the theatre has a critical role in shaping the national conversation about Romania's past and present as an imagined community and that the responsibility to connect to reality in an honest discussion lies with the younger generation. On one hand, Rolando criticizes the theatre for being only for the elite, and on the other hand, Carbunariu calls the government out for attempting to censor the message theatres are sharing. By writing this play and including the criticisms about theatre, Carbunariu acknowledges the part theatre plays in reimagining the national identity and how theatre contributes to the dialogue about global community. The characters are convinced they should visit one of the theatres when Rolando comes across an article about them,

[88] Andreea Marin and her show were also mentioned in Ion's *Vitamins* from Chapter 2; Carbunariu uses her here because she is a well-known reality TV "star" and if the characters take action during her show there will be a lot of people watching and more people will notice the black-out.

> A strange phenomenon has struck at the heart of some of Bucharest's best-known businesses. A group of people, enemies of the law, have been cutting off the power in various clubs, supermarkets, etc., creating a panic among customers and staff alike. (25)

A sense of pride and purpose fills the characters, thrilled that they have instilled feelings of fear and suspicion among the citizens of Bucharest.

We next see the characters after they have visited a theatre in Bucharest; they are all shouting over one another about what has happened. It turns out that someone caught them as they were flipping the switch and, in her panic, Maria hit him repeatedly with a hammer. She is not sure whether or not she killed him, but she brought the hammer with her so that the police will not be able to find "the murder weapon" (28). Maria seems to be in shock, as she begins to babble about how she'll lose her job if they are discovered. She and Paula begin to argue back and forth about how ridiculous they each find the other. Maria tells Paula to get out of her car, but before she does Rolando suggests they take a break from one another for two months. He seems to believe it is too dangerous for them to continue right now, both because they were nearly caught and because they are beginning to lose patience with one another. The women are shocked and dismayed by his suggestion of such a long break; it is clear that they are all quite dependent on one another. Rolando's attempt to break up the gathering throws them all off-kilter; the characters are unable to function without one another. They are no longer able to distinguish themselves as individuals, separate and distinct from one another.

They pass the time hoping to run into one another at the clubs, hoping that Rolando will call off the "break," and looking for new ways to get a rush. At the end of the two months they are all desperate to see one another again and to get back into their routine. Paula, it turns out, has spent some time doing research and has discovered that a very popular DJ is going to be at one of the clubs and that all the "cool motherfuckers" will be in attendance. Again the play suggests an attack on certain "cultured" members of Romanian society. The opportunity to destroy something this group desires seems like the perfect way for the trio to get back into the swing of things. In order to take any attention off that club, Rolando and Paula convince Maria to call the police to tell them that there will be some activity at four or five other clubs in Bucharest. They are convinced they have created a diversion that will allow them to make their moves

without scrutiny (32). Maria sums up her dissatisfaction with how connected yet unconnected everyone is by saying,

> Each day we're closer
> To nobody and no one.
> And that's the way it should be.
> Nobody's on TV today
> Talking about nothing. (33)

Maria's message also speaks to an absence of coherent individual or societal (and perhaps national) identity.

The play explores existing concerns about joining a global community and losing the sense of belonging to the Romanian community. It suggests that becoming a part of the global community is great in theory ("and that's the way it should be"), but the reality is less spectacular. Instead of gaining a sense of larger community, the play suggests that Romania (and perhaps specifically the younger generation) is losing any sense of community at all, which is bad for the future. Denise Roman, research scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles, echoes this theory in her book *Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex, and Everyday Life in Postcommunist Romania*. Roman asserts that there are so many influences in modern-day Romania that the people are unable to keep track of their own identities. She specifically refers to these identities as "under construction" and suggests that the constant flux prevents the people from moving forward (5-7). The manner in which the characters have become dependent on one another reinforces this notion; they no longer have any concept of who they are as individuals, only how they function as a unit.

The final scene of *Stop the Tempo* shows Maria delivering a monologue to the audience: she is no longer employed, is living off her parents, and cannot even afford gas for her car. She spends all of her days and nights wandering into public buildings looking for a "sign." During their last job, Rolando and Paula were electrocuted just as they turned off the power, while Maria watched from inside the club. She says that TV reported their deaths were accidental and that they panicked, but she does not believe it. Her next few lines are a metaphor for Romanians who are disillusioned and full of frustration and anger: "I'm sure they managed to find their way out through the darkness. Because they did pull the switch. And that's the only thing that matters, after all, isn't it?" (34-35). Maria's final words—"we still have a lot of projects planned for

Romania"—seem contradictory to the overt criticism implemented throughout (35). Perhaps the point is to convey that despite the denigration of the choices made by certain Romanians, there is still hope that things will improve. Alternatively, it may be that Maria's voice has become the voice of the very group the play has vilified and that by giving that group the final word—there will be many changes yet to come in Romania—the future is grim.

To conclude this chapter, I return again to Bhabha who advocates for a "hybridity of imagined communities" (7). Peca and Carbunariu clearly propose that the interweavings of history are a critical component of the new national identity Romania is creating, which appears to emulate Bhabha's hybrid model. Both playwrights indicate that acknowledging the experiences of the past (hauntings) is integral to helping the nation move forward, and that the people of Romania have a great task ahead of them in establishing which outside influences they choose to incorporate into their new identity.

CHAPTER SIX
CODA

> [c]onsider theatrical performances as cultural productions which serve specific cultural and theatrical communities at particular historical moments as sites for the negotiation, transmission, and transformation of cultural values, the products of their own place and time that are nevertheless productive of social and historical reification or change. (Knowles 10)

Theatre scholar Ric Knowles, author of the 2004 text *Reading the Material Theatre,* proposes that theatre productions can be "read" in similar ways as written texts. Knowles' quote above suggests theatre performances' impact can be significant—capable of influencing and being influenced by cultural values. By combining Knowles' theory with Marvin Carlson's, I aim to contextualize my assertion that Romanian identity is a contested site by recounting my experience attending the Sibiu International Theatre Festival in Sibiu, Romania in 2004. The people of Romania are poised in Bhabha's "moment of transit" as they move away from the anxiety that surrounds their position in the global community. Since their 2007 acceptance into the EU, the Romanian people face the possibility of finally putting a stop to the anxiety that they have to constantly prove themselves to the outside world. The festival provides a concrete example of the way the nation of Romania uses the arts to define its position in relationship to the international community of nations. As such it suggests the importance of the issues raised by the Romanian playwrights I have discussed as they renegotiate and potentially transform their homeland's sense of past and present.

Previous chapters have included analysis of plays using Carlson's hauntings as a theoretical frame. In this chapter, I introduce the concept of haunting as it relates to a festival rather than a script. Diversity and the resulting cultural exchange are paramount to the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. For ten days, the small medieval city of Sibiu, Romania, located in the heart of Transylvania, is home to the Sibiu International Theatre Festival (SITF).[89] Every summer since 1994, the city hosts hundreds of artists from around the globe, including those from theatre, music, and dance. Regardless of language or cultural barriers, these visitors and

[89] During my visit in 2004, I was able to spend some time speaking with Constantin Chiriac and Dr. Noel Witts, two of the founders of the festival.

native Romanians are able to transcend their differences and share their experiences as participants and audience members. Each evening after a full day of workshops, performances, and seminars, festival attendees gather together to play music, dance, and share stories. Since its beginning, this festival has drawn theatre artists from all over the world. The motto of the festival, “Where East Meets West” is symbolic of the importance Romanians place on cultural exchange; its longevity and increased popularity are evidence that other nations also recognize the importance of this exchange.

Constantin Chiriac, an actor with the Sibiu-based theatre company “Radu Stanca,” decided to draw attention to Sibiu in 1994 by organizing a theatre festival. He recruited fellow Romanians Nicolae Manolescu, Marina Constantinescu, Cristina Dumitrescu, Silviu Purcarete, Tompa Gabor, and Victor Ioan Frunza to assist him in his plan. He also solicited the help of theatre artists from the United States (Dr. Kenneth Campbell, Professor of Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia and Artistic Director and Co-Founder of The Blue Ridge Theatre Festival in Richmond, Virginia) and the United Kingdom (Professor Noel Witts, Director of Studies, DeMontfort University of Leicester, England). In 1994, eight countries participated in the festival. Access to all of the performances was free of charge, which was especially important for Sibiu’s many students who could not afford ten days of theatre otherwise. In 2001, the festival hosted participants and guests from over fifty-five countries. Since then, the numbers have continued to increase, and the festival has continued to draw participants from all over the world. Additionally, the festival has helped boost the profile of Sibiu. According to Contstantin Chiriac, in May 2004, Sibiu received word that it would be named “Cultural Capital of Europe 2007,” partly due to the ways the festival brings together groups from all over the world for cultural exchange.

The SITF relies on financial support from a variety of sources. It is produced by the “Democracy through Culture” Foundation, in association with the Romanian Broadcasting Company, and it receives other financial support from a variety of national and international agencies. The Festival is organized by many different people, including the “Radu Stanca” Theatre in Sibiu, Sibiu City Hall, Sibiu Local Council, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, Theatre People Association, Lucian Blaga University—Sibiu, and WENS Tour. Because the SITF relies so heavily on a variety of governmental sources for funding, it is safe to assume that there is a political impact on the festival. Compared to what the political influence was on

theatre under communism, however, the sway today is negligible. Because of the significant contributions the festival has made and continues to make not only to the city of Sibiu, but the region of Transylvania and the country of Romania, it is difficult to imagine in the foreseeable future that the political influence would result in negative changes to the festival. The cultural exchanges that have come about as a result of this festival cannot be downplayed. Citizens of the former Yugoslavia come together to create in Sibiu, as do Palestinians and Israelis. Romanians, Germans and Hungarians create work together. Artists from the countries of the former Soviet Union sit and share ideas and experiences with one another over ţuica, a Romanian plum brandy. It is true that other countries, and even other parts of Romania, offer similar theatre festivals. What makes the SITF unique is its commitment to performances and events that are free of charge, its commitment to its community, and its commitment to bridging cultural and ethnic boundaries through performance.

Based on my experience in 2004, there is an anxiety that underscores the ten day festival; this anxiety is symbolic of a larger anxiety evident throughout Romania, especially prior to EU inclusion—provide Westerners with "what they want." The focus on Western approval often comes at the exclusion of accepted national norms, which may result in confusion about Romanian identity. According to George Schöpflin's *Nations, Identity, Power* (2000), "[o]ur sense of security in the world, our identity—both individual and collective—depend on the coherence of symbolic and concrete factors" (8). While response to the festival is overwhelmingly positive, the focus on more Western elements may subvert any positive experience shared by the varied audience and reinforce Romania's position in Bhabha's "moment of transit."

Each of the plays examined here, as well as my experience at the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, pre-date Romania's inclusion in the European Union. Before Romania's place as a member nation was cemented, the people of Romania exhibited a great deal of anxiety about their position in the global community. Tensions emerged between those Romanians who eschew Western ideals in favor of focusing on what is uniquely "Romanian" and those who advocate for accepting the West's influence as part of joining the global community. This tension is reminiscent of Bhabha's "Janus-faced construction" mentioned in Chapter One, and is recognized and redirected by the playwrights in this work. The plays examined here become part of the larger conversation about Romania's place in the global community by re-using material

from Romania's past. Re-using this material, acknowledging the experiences shared by Romanians who lived during communism and especially Ceauşescu's reign, and then criticizing the way Romania has not moved past those experiences despite the time that has passed, are some of the ways that these playwrights are producing work that fits into Carlson's idea of haunting. To conclude, I return to Earnest Renan's "What is a Nation?" first cited in Chapter One, which suggests, "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation […]" (11). The playwrights appear to suggest that only by forgetting—not the experiences, but the specific details that have a tendency to stymie us—is the nation able to move forward from what is holding it back.

It is at this point that I end this manuscript. There are many possibilities for additional study of Romanian theatre, and I hope that this is merely the first in a series of work. The relationships I have forged with this group of playwrights and to the SITF deserve to be nourished and fostered. My analysis is based almost exclusively on the texts of these plays, and not on productions. In the near future I would like to return to Romania to watch firsthand the productions analyzed here, layering my analysis with reception theory of the productions. As I mentioned earlier, I am unable at this time to include works from non-ethnically Romanian playwrights as there is little available in English. Additional time and resources may enable me to delve into this rich terrain, and the relationships I have built with organizations like UNITER may prove invaluable for this type of study. The burden to continue this type of work on Romanian theatre is not mine alone, however. Now that Romania has joined the European Union, it has gained visibility in the Western world. I hope this increased visibility draws other scholars to Romania and the unique issues the people there confront both on and off stage.

REFERENCES

Alterescu, Simion. *An Abridged History of Romanian Theatre*. Bucharest: Romania Academy of the Socialist Republic. 1985. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* New York: Verso. 1983. Print.

Bacon, Walter M., Jr. "Romania." *Communism in Eastern Europe.* Ed. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, 162-185. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1984. Print.

Banham, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1995. Print.

----. *The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1988. Print.

Bennett, Beate Hein. "Saviana Stanescu: Romanian Poet and Playwright." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 2003, vol. 23, no.1 18-27. Print.

---. "The Avram Goldfaden International Theatre Festival in Iasi." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 2003, vol. 23, no.3 12-23. Print.

Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences.* London: Routledge. 1997. Print.

Berberoglu, Berch. *The National Question: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Self-Determination in the 20th century.* Philadelphia: Temple UP. 1995. Print.

Berry, David. *The Romanian Mass Media and Cultural Development.* Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate. 2004. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge. 1994. Print.

---. *Nation and Narration.* Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge. 1990. Print.

Boia, Lucian. *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*. Budapest: Central European University Press. 2001. Print.

---. *Romania*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd.. 2001. Print.

Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers. Eds. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1998. Print.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard UP. 1991. Print.

Brockett, Oscar. *History of the Theatre*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 2003. Print.

Brown, Michael E., ed. *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*. Princeton: Princeton UP. 1993. Print.

Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity without groups." *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights.* Eds. Stephen May, Tariq Modood, and Judith Squires. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2004. Print.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town.* New Jersey: Princeton UP. 2008. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter.* London: Routledge. 1993. Print.

---. *Gender Trouble.* London: Routledge. 1990. Print.

---. *The Judith Butler Reader.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2004. Print.

Carbunariu, Gianina. "Stop the Tempo!" Stanescu and Gerould 1-35.

Carlson, Marvin. *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2001. Print.

---.*Performance: A Critical Introduction.* London: Routledge. 1996. Print.

Cartner, Holly. *Since the Revolution: Human Rights in Romania.* A Helsinki Watch Report. 1991. Print.

"Catalogue: Full List of Plays." www.peca.ro. n.p, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2011.

Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1986. Print.

Chiriac, Constantin. Personal correspondence. 3 June 2004.

Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1989. Print.

Creanga, Ion. *The Impudent Rooster.* Rascol, Sabina, adaptation. New York: Dutton Children's Books. 2004. Print.

Cripps, Charlotte. "Preview: *Kebab*, Royal Court Theatre, London" *The Independent.* 22 October 2007. Print.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1998. Print.

---. *The Writing of History.* New York: Columbia UP. 1988. Print.

Deletant, Dennis and Ramona Gonczol-Davies. *Colloquial Romanian: The Complete Course for Beginners.* London: Routledge. 1983. Print.

Denton, Martin. "Waxing West." www.newyorktheatre.com. n.p, April 12, 2007. Web. 20 January 2012.

Duncan, Jane. "Romania. Kiss Me!" Message to Bogdan Georgescu. 4 Sept. 2010. Email.

---. "Vitamins." Message to Vera Ion. 4 Sept. 2010. Email.

---. "Bus and Family Ties." Message to Cristian Panaite. 4 Sept. 2010. Email.

---. "Your Work." Message to Saviana Stanescu. 4 Sept. 2010. Email.

Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols.* Princeton: Princeton UP. 1991. Print.

---. *The Sacred and the Profane.* San Diego: Harcourt, Inc. 1987. Print.

Elsom, John. *Cold War Theatre.* London: Routledge. 1992. Print.

Encyclopedia of Human Rights, Volume 1. Ed. David Forsyth. Oxford: Oxford UP. 2009. Print.

Engebrigtsen, Ada. *Exploring Gypsiness: Power, Exchange and Interdependence in a Transylvanian Village.* New York: Berghahn Books. 2007. Print.

Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Ed. Fredrik Barth. Boston: Little, Brown. 1969. Print.

Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights. Eds. Stephen May, Tariq Madood and Judith Squires. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2004. Print.

Foucalt, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* New York: Pantheon Books. 1972. Print.

---. *The History of Sexuality.* New York: Vintage Books. 1990. Print.

Foucalt Reader. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books. 1984. Print.

Fortier, Anne-Marie. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. New York: Berg. 2002. Print.

Gallagher, Tom. "Nationalism and Romanian Political Culture in the 1990s," Light and Phinnemore 104-124.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nationalism.* New York: NYUP. 1998. Print.

Gener, Randy. "Quintet 2000." Stanescu and Gerould xxiii-xxx.

---."Restaging Romania," *American Theatre.* 2007, vol. 24, no. 5, 32-33, 70-71. Print.

Georgescu, Bodgan. "Romania. Kiss Me!" Stanescu and Gerould 38-54.

Ghitulescu, Mircea. "Romania." *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Europe.* Eds. Don Rubin, Peter Nagy, and Phillipe Rouyer. London: Routledge. 1994. Print.

Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Stanford: Stanford UP. 1991. Print.

Hampton, Wilborn. "Go West, Young Woman (Ceauşescu Ghosts Too)." *New York Times.* 17 April 2007. Print.

Hartnoll, Phyllis. *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre.* Oxford: Oxford UP. 1983. Print.

Harvie, Jen. *Staging the UK.* Manchester: Manchester UP. 2005. Print.

Hetherington, Kevin. *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics.* London: Sage Publishing. 1998. Print.

Hobsbawm, E.J. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1992. Print.

Hosking, Geoffrey and George Schopflin, eds. *Myths and Nationhood.* New York: Routledge. 1997. Print.

Hubner, Zygmunt. *Theater and Politics.* Evanston: Northwestern UP. 1992. Print.

Huddart, David. *Homi K. Bhabha.* New York: Routledge. 2006. Print.

Ieronim, Ioana. *The Gowns.* 2006. Print.

---. *Special Mission.* 2005. Print.

Illyes, Elemer. *National Minorities in Romania: Change in Transylvania*. New York: Columbia UP. 1982. Print.

Ion,Vera. "Vitamins." Stanescu and Gerould 56-100.

Imre, Zoltan. "Staging the Nation: Changing Concepts of a National Theatre in Europe." *New Theatre Quarterly.* 2008, vol. 24:1, 75-94. Print.

Irimia, Miheala. "McEscu," *Dilema.* 2001, vol. IX, no. 433, 1-8. Print.

Jenkins, Richard. *Re-thinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1997. Print.

Kapoor, Priya. "Romanian Dirge: Women's Ritualistic Narratives of Life and Death as Cultural Constructions of Identity in Southeastern Europe." *Intercultural Communication and Creative Practice: Music, Dance and Women's Cultural Identity.* Ed. Laura Lengel. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers. 2005. Print.

Kobialka, Michal. "Historiography." Class Notes, January 6-21, 2005.

Knowles, Ric. *Reading the Material Theatre.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2004. Print.

Kruger, Loren. *The National Stage: Theater and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992. Print.

Kullman, Colby H. and William C. Young, eds. *Theatre Companies of the World*. New York: Greenwood Press. 1986. Print.

Kurti, Laszlo. *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press. 2001. Print.

Lamb, Ruth S. *The World of Romanian Theatre*. Claremont: Ocelot Press. 1976. Print.

Malita, Liviu. "The Censor's Verdict." *Theater.* 2009, vol. 39:2, 5-13. Print.

Martin, Joe. "*The Idiot* and Romanian Renaissance: The Sibiu International Festival." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 2002, vol. 22, no. 2. 57-58. Print.

Matei-Chesnoiu, Monica. *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory.* Madision, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 2006. Print.

McMahon, Patrice C. "Nicolae Ceaușescu," Forsyth 273-276.

McNally, Raymond T. and Radu Florescu. *In Search of Dracula.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1994. Print.

Menta, Ed. *The Magic World Behind the Curtain: Andrei Serban in the American Theatre.* New York: Peter Lang. 1995. Print.

Mischiu, Bogdan. "Rumania, 1818-1852". *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900.* Ed. Laurence Senelick. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1991. Print.

Mitu, Sorin. *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania.* Budapest: Central European UP. 2001. Print.

Modreanu, Christina. "The Old Road Rapidly Aging: Changes in Romania's Theater since

1989." *Theater.* 2009, vol. 39:2, 23-31. Print.

---."The Romanian Theatre Landscape Today." Stanescu and Gerould 248-252.

Moldovan, Ioana. "Interview with Gianina Carbunariu: Romanian Playwright and Theatre Director." *Critical Stages: The IATC Webjournal*, IATC, 2 April 2010. Web. 31 Dec. 2011.

Moraru, Cristian. "Intellectual Diaspora and Critical Spirit." *Romanian Review.* 1990, vol. 4, 3-8. Print.

Nelega, Alina. "Things that Have to do with Us: A Playwright's Notes on the Struggle for New Romanian Plays." *Theater.* 2009, vol. 39:2, 71-77. Print.

Niculescu, Ionut. "A Brief Chronological History of the Romanian Theatre." *Romanian Review.* 1982, vol. 5/6/7, 223-229. Print.

Orel, Gwen. "From Bucharest to New York, Reality Takes the Stage." *New York Times.* 16 July 2006. Print.

Panaite, Cristian. *Bus.* 2006. Print.

---. *Family Ties*. 2006. Print.

Pascu, Stefan. *A History of Transylvania.* New York: Dorset Press. 1982. Print.

Peca, Stefan. *Bucharest Calling.* 2006. Print.

---. "Romania 21." Stanescu and Gerould 102-167.

---. *The Sunshine Play.* 2005. Print.

Petrut, Tudor. "An Overview of the Romanian Theatre." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 1993, vol. 13, 31-34. Print.

The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe. Eds. Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell. Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate. 1999. Print.

Poole, Charles B. "Methods of Theatre Criticism." Class Notes, January 26, 2005.

Pop, Liliana. *Democratising Capitalism? The Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformations in Romania, 1989-2001.* Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester UP. 2006. Print.

Popescu, Marian. "In Cinderella's Shoes: Romanian Theater Twenty Years After communism." *Theater.* 2009, vol. 39:2, 15-21. Print.

---. *The Stage and the Carnival: Romanian Theater after Censorship.* Bucharest, Romania: Paralela 45 Publishing House. 2000. Print.

Post-Communist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition. Ed. Duncan Light and David Phinnemore. New York: Palgrave. 2001. Print.

Pourchot, Eric. "After Ceausescu: A Discussion of Romanian Arts Issues at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 1996, vol. 16, 44-49. Print.

---. "Performing Arts of Romania at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 1996, vol. 16, 14-20. Print.

Questions of Cultural Identity. Eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1996. Print.

Rand, Herbert C. "Pages from the Past: Liviu Ciulei's Restoring Theatricality to the Art of the Theatre." *Slavic and East European Performance.* 1994, vol. 14, 32-41. Print.

Raper, Kate, Joe Cook, and Ben Payne. "Update from Eastern Europe." *New Theatre Quarterly.* 1992, vol. 8, 377-388. Print.

Renan, Earnest. "What is a Nation?," Bhabha 8-22. Print.

Rokem, Freddie. *Performing History.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 2000. Print.

Roman, Denise. *Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex and Everyday Life in Postcommunist Romania.* New York: Lexington Books. 2003. Print.

roMANIA After 2000. Eds. Saviana Stanescu and Daniel Gerould. New York: Martin E. Segal Center Publications. 2007. Print.

Rubin, Don. "Romania." *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre.* Ed. Don Rubin, Peter Nagy, and Phillipe Rouyer. New York: Routledge. 1994. Print.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction.* London: Routledge. 2002. Print.

Schöpflin, George. *Nations, Identity and Power.* New York: NYUP. 2000. Print.

Smith, Alan. "The Transition to a Market Economy in Romania and the Competitiveness of Exports," Light and Phinnemore 127-149. Print.

Smith, Anthony. *Nationalism.* Cambridge: Polity Press. 2001. Print.

---. *National Identity.* Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press. 1993. Print.

Spariosu, Mihai I. and Dezso Benedek. *Ghosts, Vampires, and Werewolves: Eerie Tales from Transylvania.* New York: Orchard Books. 1994. Print.

Stanescu, Saviana. *Aurolac Blues.* 2006. Print.

---. *Lenin's Shoe.* 2005. Print.

---. Personal correspondence. February 5, 2006.

---. *Waxing West: A Hairy Tale in Two Acts and Four Seasons*. Stanescu and Gerould 168-246.

The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1998. Print.

Ştefânescu, Bogdan. "Why Can't the Romanian Be an American," *Dilema.* 2001, vol. IX, no. 433, 9-13. Print.

Stefanova, Kalina. *Eastern European Theatre After the Iron Curtain.* Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers. 2001. Print.

Stokes, Gail. *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe.* Oxford: Oxford UP. 1993. Print.

Striff, Erin. Ed. *Performance Studies.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2003. Print.

Sturdza, Ioana, Raymond Vianu, and Mary Lazarescu, translators. *Fairy Tales and Legends from Romania.* New York: Twayne Publishers. 1972. Print.

Tompa, Andrea. "Silviu Purcarete's World." *Theater.* 2009, vol. 39:2, 33-41. Print.

Treptow, Kurt W. *A History of Romania.* Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies. 1997. Print.

---. *Romania: A Crossroads of Europe.* Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies. 2002. Print.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications. 1982. Print.

---. "Symbols in African Ritual," *Science* March 16, 1972, vol. 179, 1100-05. Print.

---. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co. 1969. Print.

Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1960. Print.

Verdery, Katherine. *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaucescu's Romania.* California: University of California Press. 1995. Print.

Verdery, Katherine. "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?" *Daedalus.* 1993, vol. 122:3, 37-46. Print.

Vianu, Lidia. *Censorship in Romania*. Budapest: Central European UP. 1998. Print.

White, George W. *Nationalism and Territory: Constructing Group Identity in Southeastern Europe.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield. 2000. Print.

Williams, Nicola and Wildman, Kim. *Romania and Moldova.* Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications. 1998. Print.

Wilmer, S.E. ed. *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 2004. Print.

Youth Policy in Romania. European Steering Committee for Youth. Bucharest: Council of Europe Publishing. 2000. Print.

Zizek, Slavoj. "Cultural Studies versus the 'Third Culture'" *South Atlantic Quarterly.* 2002, vol. 101:1, 19-32. Print.

---. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* New York: Verso. 2001. Print.

---. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture.* Cambridge: MIT Press. 1991. Print.

---. *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*. New York: Routledge. 2004. Print.

---. *The Universal Exception*. Butler, Rex and Scott Stephens, eds. New York: Continuum. 2006. Print.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jane G. Duncan completed her PhD in Theatre Studies from Florida State University in Spring 2012. Jane holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from the University of Dayton (Ohio) and in 1998 obtained her Master of Fine Arts in Theatre from Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond, VA). Since then, Jane has worked as a theatre educator and practitioner for a variety of arts organizations and institutions of higher learning. Jane was an Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Central Arkansas, and a Visiting Instructor of Theatre at Barry University (Miami Shores, FL). In addition, Jane has worked as an adjunct instructor and high school Drama teacher. Jane's teaching experience extends to the Education departments at regional theatres New American Theater (Rockford, IL) and TheatreVirginia (Richmond, VA), as well as SPARC (School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community), Arkansas Arts Center (Little Rock), and Metropolitan Theatre Conservatory (Atlanta). Jane has served as the Resident Dramaturg and Associate Artistic Director for The Promethean Theatre (Ft. Lauderdale) since 2006, and worked as a Dramaturg for Florida Stage's new play festival First Stage from 2009-2011. In 2011, Jane was recognized with the Adjunct Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award by the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences at Nova Southeastern University (Ft. Lauderdale). Jane has presented at international, national, and regional theatre conferences, and her essay "The (R)Evolution of Romanian Theatre" was published in the anthology *Theatre and Dance in Eastern Europe: The Changing Scene* (Scarecrow Press, 2008).