needs to be remembered if sense is to be made of the France of the present. In this and other novels, Daeninckx has demonstrated that the polar form may be effectively subverted in order to repoliticise events and places that many within French society would rather deny or ignore. He has thus revealed to a mass audience that

the new contemporary racism centering on questions of immigration (...) has its roots in the era of decolonization and modernization, in the inversion of movements of population between the old colonies and the old metropoles (...)\(^5\)

If the post-Mitterrandian polity is ultimately to accept this uncomfortable truth, then much that occurred in France and Algeria in the period 1954-1962 will need to be revisited and reconfigured in the collective French consciousness. France’s determinedly troublesome storytellers may then be in a position, finally, to hand their memorial burden back to the nation’s politicians and historians.

\(^5\) Ross, *op.cit.,* 9.

INVENTING POST-WALL EUROPE:
VISIONS OF THE ‘OLD’ CONTINENT IN CONTEMPORARY
BRITISH FICTION AND DRAMA

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The collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe\(^1\) and in ex-Soviet Central Asia in 1989 and the early 1990s has repeatedly been likened, in its micro- and macro-political impact, to the disintegration of colonial empires earlier in the century. Central to the perception of both historical shifts has been a crisis of (self-)representation involving, among other things, the reshuffling and/or downright disruption of traditional dichotomies such as self/same - other, here - there, and inside - outside. The serious problematisation of the idea of Europe as a unified whole may likewise be placed among the signs of the new condition. This idea, it should be noted in passing, (still) organises a multitude of anticolonial and postcolonial discourses; ‘Eurocentrism’, a misnomer and a corollary of a widespread synecdochic reduction, is among postcolonial theory’s most notorious *bêtes noires.* For lack of a more precise

\(^1\) Predictably, geopolitical terminology such as ‘Eastern Europe’ and ‘Central Europe’ is hardly ever characterised by clarity or the absence of ambiguity. Nevertheless, I shall try to clarify some of the geopolitical concepts I use here. Throughout the essay, ‘Central Europe’ refers to Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland whereas ‘Eastern Europe’ means the rest of postcommunist Europe. I use the ‘other’ Europe ironically to refer to both Central and Eastern Europe and, like Maria Todorova in her recently published study *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 1997), question the validity of the supposedly politically neutral terms ‘East Central’ and ‘South East’ Europe. ‘Post-wall Europe’, on the other hand, refers to the whole continent in the aftermath of the fall of communism.
term I shall use ‘Eurocentrism’ in this essay to designate an undue and distorting privileging of Europe’s Western half.

Moreover, as postcommunist changes have grown deeper and more radical, it has become increasingly clear that not even the so-called ‘other’ Europe is so uniform as it appeared to be in the recent communist past. People in what used to be loosely termed ‘the Eastern bloc’ have had to adapt to new developments and complexities of (self-)definition and marginal but essential to the human condition in the postmodern era. The term ‘Eurocentrism’ has recently come in for a lot of criticism. For an informed commentary on the emergence and subsequent history of the concept, see Alex Delfini & Paul Piccone, ‘Modernity, Libertarianism and Critical Theory: Reply to Pellican’, Telos, 112 (1998): 23-25. Despite scepticism in learned circles, I shall retain the use of ‘totalitarianism’ and its cognate adjective ‘totalitarian’ in the present essay and shall follow Hannah Arendt (The Origins of Totalitarianism, New York, 1949) in applying them to Nazi and communist political regimes alike.

The present essay is an attempt to shed light on post-Wall Europe’s representations in four contemporary British texts: Caryl Churchill’s Mad Forest (1990), Julian Barnes’ The Porcupine (1992), Malcolm Bradbury’s Doctor Crimionale (1992), and David Edgar’s Pentecost (1994). The texts may appear a curious assortment at first glance but, in fact, each of them illustrates, in its own way, the difficulty of rendering, on the stage or in fiction, the new historical condition diagnosed by Bradbury and Zaborowska. Besides, each text purports to represent a particular phase of what (pace Bradbury!) I shall call the Change in Eastern and Central Europe, thus providing glimpses into the West’s perception of that complex and ambivalent process. While Mad Forest focuses on Romania and is a reaction to a mainstream Western tendency to gothicise the country in the wake of Nicolae Ceausescu’s fall, the other three texts are in significant ways linked with the recent history of my native country and are therefore of special interest to me as a Bulgarian reader.

The task which I have set myself in this essay presupposes an engagement with a particular type of critical theory. As will be seen, most of the theoretical tools I use come either directly from postcolonial theory or from versions of it adapted to the ambiguous terrain of the ‘other’ Europe. To understand how such adaptations have become possible and to get an idea of the four texts’ ideological legacy of past representations, we must consider, yet again, the story of the ‘other’ Europe’s invention and of its denizens’ reactions to the position(s) their region has been assigned within the ‘old’ continent’s ‘imaginative geography’. My summary of the story in question will take into account Larry Wolff’s analy-
sis of Eastern Europe's construction,9 and Milica Bakic-Hayden's partial correction of his model and other pertinent writing on the subject.

Inventing the 'other' Europe

According to Larry Wolff, the process of Eastern Europe's invention started in the Enlightenment. Whereas before the eighteenth century 'the crucial conceptual division of Europe' had been between the South and the North, the Enlightenment 'introduced a different perspective on [the continent]', with Paris and London – rather than Rome and Florence – gaining supremacy and becoming 'fixed points of the cultural compass'. 10 This shift in perception resulted in the production of the notional entities of 'Western' and 'Eastern Europe'. The relationship between the two constructs was characterised by asymmetry as 'Eastern Europe was made legible and accountable to Western Europe'.11 Western Europe assumed the role of 'centre' while Eastern Europe was assigned that of a 'periphery' or, as will be shown further on, 'peripheries', a series of marginal localities distinguished from one another on the basis of their difference from, or relative affinity with, the 'centre'.

The invention of Eastern Europe, according to Wolff, likewise involved a process of 'demi-Orientalisation':12 Enlightenment 'Philosophic Geography' excluded Eastern Europe from Europe 'proper' whereas scientific cartograpraphic research exposed the exclusion as merely fanciful. However, even scientific cartography was in doubt as to the exact geographical demarcation between Europe and Asia. The shifting location of the 'old' continent's eastern borders (the Don, the Volga or the Ural?) 'encouraged the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion'.13 The paradox is neatly summed up in the phrase 'in Europe but not of it'.

Wolff's model of the two notional Europes has been partially corrected by Milica Bakie-Hayden who tacitly discards his idea of Eastern Europe's 'demi-orientalisation' and prefers to speak of 'a gradation of Orientals' or 'nesting Orientalisms'14 in what may be described as a Eurasian 'poetics of space'.15 She discerns in it 'a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised' in which 'Asia is more “East” or “other” than Eastern Europe',16 and within Eastern Europe itself certain localities appear to be more 'Eastern' than others. Central Europe would thus emerge as the least 'Eastern' (and most 'Western') part of the 'other' Europe whereas the Balkans would be seen as its most irredeemably Oriental(ised) region. Within the Balkans themselves certain ethnostructural spaces would appear to be more 'Eastern' than others.

As recent developments in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the region have shown, 'Easternness' is for the most part defined in terms of Ottoman rule in the past and a tradition of Eastern Orthodox ('Byzantine') Christianity. A history of Habsburg domination and Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, may be interpreted as 'credentials' for belonging to 'Europe'. Such interpretations underscore the ambiguity of 'other' European responses to the work of the inventing Western imagination.

Responses of this kind may be subsumed under the rubric of Occidentalism. Although lacking Orientalism's prominence, its imagological Other has, among other things, proved to be a useful interpretative tool. It has, in a sense, corrected the original Orientalist paradigm which stressed the East's discursive production by and for the West. Occidentalism has been defined by James G. Carrier as a sum of 'stylised images of the West'.17 The images may be self-produced as well as constructed by various others.

The stories of Eastern and Central European Occidentalism have been closely bound up with the construction of national and/or political identities. In different parts of the 'other' Europe attitudes to the West have been known to vary from demonisation to an idealisation and a desire to be like it. The latter attitude is frequently intimately related to national

9 In Larry Wolff's usage 'Eastern Europe' subsumes both 'properly' Eastern and Central Europe.
11 Ibid., 935.
13 Ibid.
15 My reference is to Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, 1964).
16 Bakic-Hayden, *op. cit.*, 918.
narratives of a traumatic separation from ‘Europe’ and the subsequent loss of a ‘pure’ cultural identity. That identity would be located in a mythical past predating the national trauma. Healing the trauma, making up for past losses and having one’s ‘Europeanness’ recognised are thus infinitely desirable goals in a multitude of Eastern and Central European contexts.

The insistence of ‘other’ Europeans on their identity with an essential(ised) West and their difference from an equally essential(ised) East is sometimes coupled with disparagement or downright rejection of more ‘Eastern’ neighbours. As a result the unfolding process of Europe’s integration, which is generally seen as the post-Wall era’s crowning achievement, is far from smooth or morally unambiguous. Pleas for continental unity and the identity of the several Europes that seem to have emerged in the meantime often rely on essentialising strategies, the suppression of uncomfortable truths and the resurfacing of deeply seated prejudices.

The four texts I propose to discuss below represent and/or embody most of the contradictions inherent in the construction of post-Wall European identities. These contradictions further complicate the difficult task of cultural translation which the texts’ authors have ambitiously undertaken. Caught in the tensions of the ongoing Change and hampered by the legacies of Orientalism and Occidentalism, Churchill, Barnes, Bradbury and Edgar have nevertheless courageously attempted to make sense, in/through literature and the theatre, of a multiplicity of situations that go well beyond traditional conceptions of rationality and ethics.

**Mad Forest: translating chaos**

Caryl Churchill’s play appeared at a time when events in Eastern Europe and, particularly, in Romania were avidly covered by the media. By 1990 when Mad Forest was first produced the street violence in Bucharest and Timisoara and the Ceausescus’ trial and execution had acquired an emblematic significance and were fostering stereotypes of the way ‘things were’ in the ‘other’ Europe. Significantly, in early 1990, Central Europe’s occidentalisation was still a thing of the future and the bi-polar division between Eastern and Western Europe was in place. The world seemed to be witnessing a melodrama in which an evil dictatorship had been toppled and the oppressed millions had triumphed. The dramatic potential of what was happening was made use of almost immediately.

Apart from Mad Forest, the disintegration and fall of the system in what used to be known as the ‘Eastern bloc’ inspired Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali’s Moscow Gold, David Edgar’s The Shape of the Table, and Timberlake Wertenbaker’s Three Birds Alighting on a Field. The need to translate the latest developments in the ‘other’ Europe for audiences that knew little about that part of the world was apparently acute. One way of carrying out the task of cultural translation was by combining the political mythology the mass media had produced with received images of the ‘other’ Europe as a gothic locale marked by tyranny, violence and chaos. In the North American context, this cultural (mal)practice engendered ingenious vampire films such as Stuart Gordon’s Bloodlines: an Evil Ancestry (1989) and Ted Nicolaou’s Subspecies (1991) as well as a neogothic political fantasy by Dan Simmons whose66 bore the suggestively familiar title of Children of the Night (1992).18

A lot in Mad Forest testifies to its author’s determination to avoid the sensationalism fostered by the mass media, on the one hand, and the use of received gothic images of Eastern Europe, on the other. Rather than focusing attention on high politics (cf. Moscow Gold where Mikhail and the late Raisa Gorbachev are central to the play’s action), Mad Forest presents scenes from the lives of two ordinary Romanian families before and after the Change. Opting for a polysemic representation of history,19 Churchill renders the momentous events of 1989 through the divergent accounts of a number of anonymous citizens.20 The dramatist avoids the use of documentary video material even when she refers to the Ceausescus’ trial and execution. She resorts to a defamiliarising strategy in an attempt to distance the play’s audience from the widely televised image of the scene. As a result Radu and Florina, two of the play’s characters, take up the roles of Nicolae and Elena and mimic their performance (69). Distrust of the mass media and of the simplistic versions of Eastern European reality they were instrumental in producing at the time is thus among Mad Forest’s distinctive traits.

18 Interestingly, Children of the Night developed out of a short story called ‘All Dracula’s Children’ (1992).


Another notable feature the play possesses is the emphasis on cultural difference. Signifiers of the 'exotic', such as a constantly reappearing vampire, are few and far between. In fact, they are definitely outnumbered by indicators of the author's own puzzlement by the unfamiliar culture she is trying to translate for her audience. The play thus initiates an intercultural dialogue in which the dramatist is a participant rather than an omniscient mentor contemplating the exchange from the outside.

At the same time, *Mad Forest* does imply a certain amount of scepticism about the *Change* and its consequences. The *Change* may well have been manipulated by members of Ceausescu's own secret police, the dreaded Securitate; the authenticity of the Revolution, as it is sometimes called in the play, is repeatedly questioned by different characters, starting with an anonymous hospital patient and ending with the young intellectual Radu:

Patient. Have they told you who was shooting on the 22nd? And why was it necessary to kill Ceausescu so quickly? (...) Did we have a revolution? Or what did we have?

Florina. He was wounded on the head... Yes, he's a bit crazy. (...)

Radu. Who was shooting on the 22nd? That's not a crazy question...

The only real night was the 21st. After that, what was going on? It was all a show. (...) Were they fighting or pretending to fight? Who let off firecrackers? Who brought loudhailers? (52-54)

Suspicion of the *Change*'s genuineness is coupled with a simplistic and decidedly negative reading of Romania's pre-communist past. The country, it transpires, never had any democratic traditions. Its history before the Second World War is above all associated with the excesses of Codreanu's ultranationalist Legion of the Archangel Michael and with ethnic tension. Significantly, the play's closing scene underscores the latter element as the Hungarian character Ianos seriously inflames some of the Romanians by stressing his own superiority as a middle-class Central European:

Ianos. You were under the Turks too long. It made you like slaves. (...) Bogdan. Leave my son alone, Hungarian bastard. And don't come near my daughter.

Ianos. I'm already fucking your daughter, you stupid peasant. (84)

A general scuffle ensues. Whatever hopes the audience may have had about the *Change* and the possibility of a 'New Order' in the future are thus shown to have been illusory.
Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary (...) [with] tiny little bits of Poland stuck in.

Barnes' postcommunist 'Anonymiana' would appear to be a similar creation, although in his case the ingredients probably came from literature and journalism rather than from 'direct' observation of the 'other' Europe. While The Porcupine's decidedly dark and cold world is strongly reminiscent of the Stalinist Russia of Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon (1940) and of Alexander Solzhenitsin's major novels, some of the stereotypically 'other' European figures that inhabit it - such as kerschiefed housewives and the local Dictator's decidedly stout daughter - have undoubtedly come from the mass media. The book's deposed Dictator Stoyo Petkanov is a composite product: he is a mixture of Todor Zhivkov, Nikita Khruschev and, possibly, a few Latin American caudillos added in for extra spice. Such generalising traits indicate that Barnes' novel is, above all, a parable of power which purports to alert us to such politically motivated and historically conditioned human flaws as the need to produce 'monsters'.

This need is repeatedly diagnosed and diligently analysed throughout the text. Stoyo Petkanov's public trial becomes the focus of the analysis. It is meant to serve as a moral test of the social order that the Change has brought into existence. In the context of the novel, attitudes to this order vary. Thus the ex-dictator Petkanov repeatedly emphasises its 'effeminacy' which, in his opinion, contrasts with the 'masculinity' of his own regime. The newly established order is irredeemably flawed because it involves a return to an outmoded system of 'bourgeois' values, which Petkanov, in the manner of Koestler's theorist Rubashov and his disciple Gletkin, regards as so much 'ethical ballast'.

The Prosecutor General Peter Solinsky is Petkanov's antithesis in the novel. A one-time believer in communism, he has renounced the old ideology and is currently a member of the opposition Green Party. It is Solinsky's task to stage-manage Petkanov's trial and press convincing charges against him. The trial is based on what is recognised as a 'Western' judiciary pattern: the prosecution should undertake to prove the defendant's guilt; theoretically at least, the accused would not be expected to prove his innocence. While such a pattern would not exclude the possibility of the defendant breaking down and confessing his crimes, confession in, and by, itself would not be considered a sign of guilt. Ideally, the trial should be open-ended.

Petkanov is sceptical about the proceedings and the possibility of a fair trial. Such an attitude is not completely unjustified. Despite the emphasis on playing by the rules and performing a ritual of memory that should 'cure' the country of the ravages of its communist past, the new authorities are trying to turn Stoyo Petkanov into a convenient scapegoat. As the trial is televised, viewers are hoping that the former Head of State will break down and they would have the satisfaction of witnessing his humiliation. For the middle-aged professor of law Solinsky the trial is a means of self-assertion, a way of proving to himself and to everyone else that he has not been turned into a non-entity by the communist system for which he now has only contempt.

Stoyo Petkanov's trial comes to be known as 'Criminal Law Case Number 1' (32). Producing evidence for the Dictator's serious crimes against the nation turns out to be very difficult: most of the details have been conveniently forgotten. As a result, Petkanov is charged with trivial offences which he finds fairly easy to refute or belittle. At the very end of the trial, the story of the ex-President's crime is changed once again by the addition of the (possibly false) charge that he ordered his own daughter's murder. This is the only charge against Petkanov which satisfies the expectations of the trial's sensation-hungry viewers. Pressing it turns Solinsky into a celebrity. However, as the evidence on which the charge is based is suspect, it seriously vitiates the open-ended character of the legal proceedings. Petkanov's trial seems to be only another show trial, not all that different from the Moscow Trials of the 1930s that Darkness at Noon is about. Thus teaching history not 'to repeat itself' appears - as ever - to be a fairly tricky proposition.

The emphasis, however, is on 'seems': there are some differences after all. For one thing, The Porcupine does not end with the defendant's execution but with the Prosecutor's moral awakening and slow realisation that latter-day monstrosity is 'banal' (meaning, as Judith Halberstam...
has remarked, 'common to all'). The key text on the 'banality' of modern monsters is, of course, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Written in the wake of this sceptical commentary on demonisation and of conflicting accounts of the Ceausescus' trial and execution, Barnes's novel repeats the lesson which Arendt attempted to teach by stressing the fact that Eichmann was only a 'cog' in a huge bureaucratic machine. Similarly, Barnes' Petkanov was no Dracula: his regime endured for such a long time because of the complicity of the governed and the strategic interests of the West. Significantly, while he was in power, the dictator was repeatedly praised for his political acumen and willingness to cooperate with the democracies on the other side of the Iron Curtain (122-126). Representing him as an inhuman monster at his public trial and turning him into a scapegoat will not help justice but will prove, yet again, that a powerful drive towards demonisation defines the human condition.

Barnes' novel is thus about certain 'universal' historical verities. There is, however, more than a hint in it that certain countries tend to grasp those truths later, or less readily, than others. The novel's treatment of monstrosity therefore implies a mentorial attitude to postcommunist Europeans insofar as it recommends that they should learn a moral lesson that the rest of the world understood about forty years earlier. Such an attitude is likewise suggested by the text's vision of the 'delayed maturity' of the local people (19, 20). The phrase brings to mind Kant's definition of Enlightenment as 'a process that releases us from the status of "immaturity",' where 'immaturity means (...) a state of our will that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us where the use of reason is called for.' 'Other' Europeans are evidently also expected to repeat the lessons of the (Western European) Enlightenment as they 'grow up' and come to resemble the 'adult' intellectuals of the 'old' continent's privileged half.

Barnes' mentorial attitude brings into play a residual Eurocentrism which, together with the erasure of his setting's distinctive features and its reduction to a postcommunist 'Anonymiana', seriously weakens his text's otherwise laudable moral concerns.

**Doctor Criminale: dangers of diversity**

Malcolm Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale* appeared in the wake of earlier writing on the 'other' Europe which readers tended to find rather superficial. Denizens of the 'old' continent's less privileged half in particular were rather resentful of his farcical representation of Slaka (see quote above) and his exploitation of the comic possibilities of stereotypes. *Doctor Criminale* may be seen as an ironic response to charges of this kind.

Unlike *The Porcupine*, Bradbury's novel is not about an anonymous 'other' European country but contains a number of references to actual geographical locations scattered all over Europe. It should be remembered though that these locations participate in an imaginative-geographical scheme which is intimately linked with the figure of Doctor Criminale. This character is seen by his creator as 'a Danubian man (...) whose life is a progress up the river' from his birthplace, the Bulgarian town of Veliko Turnovo, to Budapest and then to Vienna. The representation of Europe - Eastern, Central and Western alike - Bradbury's novel projects does not conform to realist conventions. The work's characters for the most part exemplify the postmodern human condition, which means, among other things, that the concept of authenticity is not relevant to their fictional universe. *Doctor Criminale* is an experimental neo-picaresque novel bristling with irony at the expense of various modes of representation and brands of critical theory purporting to explain them.

As is often the case with ironic fiction, the story is narrated by a figure whose assertions and actions should evoke detachment rather than readerly identification. The narrator in question is a young British journalist called Francis Jay who is steeped in diverse fads and fashions characteristic of Western European political and intellectual life in the nineties. He is definitely not 'a character in the world-historical sense'.
and in this respect resembles Petworth, the ineffectual British visitor to Slaka in Bradbury's earlier novel *Rates of Exchange*.

As 'a mega-star in the [world's] cultural firmament' and a 'Great Thinker of the Age of Glasnost' Criminale is the diametrical opposite of the 'naive, anonymous, provincial' Francis Jay.32 These two characters are apparently meant to typify a postmodern and highly problematical version of the relationship between Western centre and 'other' European periphery. However, many old fears and anxieties are definitely part of it. Despite his fame and importance in a world that transcends the confines of the 'old' continent, Criminale is portrayed as a liminal figure, a representative of the periphery, embodying some of the West's deeply seated anxieties over the fluidity and indeterminacy of the borderline separating it from an alien and unfamiliar East. He mediates between East and West, but his mediation often involves the transgression of moral boundaries and the disruption of basic political distinctions.

One of the intertexts this rendition of Criminale's fictional life evokes is the story of the archetypal Danubian transgressor Count Dracula. Like the 'king vampire', Criminale serves the powers of evil represented, in his case, by a heavily mythologised 'other' European secret police. Before the *Change*, he unscrupulously exploited the West's academic, political and financial institutions to further their sinister plans. After the *Change*, he is still tied up with them. Criminale is eminently successful in his espionage and other unsavoury activities because of his ability to pass for a bona fide academic. Like Dracula in Stephen Arata's seminal interpretation of Bram Stoker's vampire classic, he is 'an accomplished Occidentalist',33 who knows his West very well. This is indicated by, among other things, his superior command of English: unlike other foreign characters in Bradbury's novels, Criminale hardly ever makes linguistic errors.

Even though the similarities between Dracula and Criminale are integrated into the novel's overall ironic structure, they point to the presence of a Eurocentric myth which, in the present writer's opinion, never gets deconstructed. This myth affects the representation of Criminale's birthplace, the town of Veliko Turnovo, and, for that matter, of the whole of the 'other' Europe. While researching Criminale's life for a television programme entitled 'Great Thinkers of the Age of Glasnost', Jay (who may also be seen as the Jonathan Harker of the story) is at first unable to identify Criminale's birthplace. Characteristically, he is misled by various reference books which locate the philosopher's place of origin in countries as different as Lithuania and Moldavia. What underlies this facile disregard of all cultural, ethnic, and historical demarcations existing within the locale loosely labelled 'Eastern Europe' is, of course, the assumption that the periphery does not really matter. When Jay finally learns from an Austrian professor's critical biography that Criminale was born in Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria, he consults more reference books ('atlas and gazetteer', 31) in an attempt to obtain information about what appears to be 'darkest Eastern Europe'. This, however, does not lift the cloud of anonymity obscuring the country of Criminale's birth. Apart from a few decidedly touristic details about Veliko Turnovo ('the ancient capital of Bulgaria, famous for its old university and monasteries, its storks and its frescoes, its castle and its ancient Arabesque merchants' houses', 31), Jay is presented with a clichéd description of Bulgaria as 'land of attar of roses, fine frescos and also poisoned umbrellas' (31). Its post-war history is shown to conform to a generalised 'Eastern bloc' pattern of events: 'liberated to [sic!] the Russians by Georgy Dimitrov' (31). The country was a minor satellite during the Cold War years, and, in the 1990s, is in the process of heading toward a market economy.

This information, naturally, does not excite the narrator's curiosity about Bulgaria. As a result the country is mentioned only rarely until almost the very end of the novel. Criminale is repeatedly characterised by Jay as 'a Hungarian' and (strange to say!) the young man's own travelling companion, the Hungarian secret agent Ildiko, never disagrees with this (152). The philosopher himself mentions Veliko Turnovo on one single occasion only and his description of it fits the Western European stereotype of 'darkest Eastern Europe': 'a place you have never heard of, a place you will never visit' (235). Then he modifies this to: 'it was a place to be born in, also a place to leave if you wished to lead a significant life' (235). The theatre of great events is assumed to be elsewhere and the 'other' Europe's peripheral status is confirmed once again.

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A dialogic element of a kind finds its way into the representation of Bulgaria and, by implication, of the 'other' Europe only a few pages before the final winding up of Jay's narrative. The devious Criminale has been dead for some time when the Balkan periphery is granted the right to speak. As a concession to the late-twentieth-century spirit of 'political correctness' and in ironic remembrance of the age-old image of nation-as-woman, its spokesperson is Dr Ludmilla Markova of Veliko Turnovo University. She begins by pooh-poohing the Western interpretation of Criminale's ideas, outlines a Bulgarian one in which the emphasis is on lived experience, goes on to denounce the smugness and 'dangerous' theories of the Western academic establishment, suggests to Jay that he should visit Bulgaria, and ends by stressing her native country's essential non-Europeanness:

Yes, very good lecture, quite deconstructive, I think (...). Only one thing. You understand nothing. (...) Nobody understands Bulgaria, it is too small country, (...) our image is negative, we are always the toy of others. But Criminale is ours, someone who struggled to exist in a world of forces no one can stop. He was born in chaos, he lived in chaos. (...) He did not only play with nothingness. He knew it. For us chaos is not a theory, it is a condition. We do not like him so much, but he is very Bulgarian writer. (...) What happens to all of you here? Why do you want the end of humanism, a great new collectivity? I wish one day you would visit my country, very nice, also sad. Nothing works, chaos comes again, we are not Europe and cannot live like Europe. (337-8)

That Dr Markova's arguments are not particularly interesting or strikingly novel goes without saying. This is probably one of the reasons why her angry outburst does not have much of an impact on Jay's late-liberal conscience. Being no late-twentieth-century Byron, he cannot see the long neglected Balkan periphery in the light of an espousable cause. Indeed, by the end of the novel Jay has comfortably shaken up with a Euro-German bureaucrat called Cosima Bruckner and has, to all intents and purposes, turned his back upon the 'other' Europe. However, one of the few advantages this part of the 'old' continent acquires in Bradbury's Euro-novel is that its discourse is given a hearing in a postmodern context celebrated for its occasional tolerance of the words and perspectives of its others.

Making monsters (2): Pentecost

Produced in 1994 when the Change was already well under way in the whole of the 'other' Europe, David Edgar's Pentecost resembles the other three texts in purporting to analyse the 'old' continent's (and the world's) destiny in the late twentieth century. As was already pointed out above, Pentecost is not the playwright's only engagement with that momentous theme. In his 1990 play The Shape of the Table similar analysis was underwritten by his preoccupation with Marxism, and Eastern Europe was chosen as a setting for what Elizabeth Sakellaridou has seen as 'his self-debates about the future of Marxist thinking in the world'.

Criticism of 'the New World Order' in Pentecost is similarly fuelled by Edgar's Marxism. The outcome of this criticism is a dystopia set in an anonymous South Eastern European country in which Bulgarian is spoken but readers and spectators are warned that it is not Bulgaria. The author's dystopian vision of the 'triumph' of capitalism in 'our country' (xx), as he calls his Anonymiana, brings into play a fair amount of Eurocentrism which seriously weakens his argument against the rise of racism and xenophobia in post-communist Eastern Europe.

Eurocentrism is apparent in the overall ideological representation of the setting and the unfolding of the play's plot. Thus, it is rather broadly hinted that following the collapse of communism even countries from the Balkan fringe, such as 'our country', are planning to 'join Europe'. This civilisational choice is made at a time of military crisis, newly awakened nationalist feeling and unthinking hatred of all 'non-Europeans'. Oblivious of its own traditional exclusion from European affairs, Edgar's Balkan Anonymiana defines its identity through persistent occidentalising references to its 'Europeanness' and through the rejection of all undesirable others.

The play is strikingly multilingual: Bulgarian is only one of a variety of 'exotic' tongues spoken in it. The linguistic bouquet also includes Polish, Russian, Arabic, and Turkish. English, in various states of grammatical decrepitude and with its American variant added for extra piquancy, is the lingua franca and the main vehicle of interpersonal communication. Two other Western European languages, German and

34 Sakellaridou, op. cit. (note 19), 151.
French, are used toward the end of the play, when, to all intents and purposes, the action appears to have moved beyond verbal communication. Apart from being in unison with the play’s title, this mixing of Eastern and Western tongues should highlight the ‘unnamed south-east European country’s’ (xx) hybridity and bring to mind a frequently quoted, clichéd description of South Eastern Europe: ‘the region where East and West literally meet’.

*Pentecost*’s opening scene enacts an aspect of this meeting: Gabriella Pecz, a local art historian, and her British colleague Oliver Davenport look at a religious painting in a building whose fictional history is yet another embodiment of the Western view of the ‘other’ Europe:

As well as warehouse, church is used by heroic peasantry for store potatoes (...) And before potatoes, Museum of Atheism and Progressive People’s Culture, And before museum, prison (...) ‘Transit Centre’, German Army, (...) [and still earlier] When we are Hungary, it Catholic, when we are holy Slavic people, Orthodox. When we have our friendly Turkish visitor who drop by for few hundred years, for while it mosque. When Napoleon pass through, is house for horses. (5)

This is not the end of the story: in Edgar’s Anonymiana’s market-oriented present, the abandoned church is frequented by prostitutes and their (Western) clients. Yet it is there that Gabriella has discovered a painting which may change Western ideas of art history. The painting is so much like Giotto’s *The Lamentation* that Oliver jokingly suggests that it was produced by the Italian artist ‘on an undocumented Balkan holiday’ (8). Gabriella, however, manages to prove, through references to the local epic tradition, that the painting was produced before Giotto. It would thus seem to be ‘the starting point of six hundred years of Western art’ (20). Rather than ‘starting’ in Italy, the European Renaissance began in ‘our country’, a Balkan periphery hovering uneasily between East and West. Oliver Davenport and Gabriella Pecz are therefore fired by the Eurocentrist ambition of restoring the painting and making the (Big Western) world take notice of it. Pecz’s argument in favour of this course of action is frankly Occidentalist:

And you know (...) progress can seem less big deal, if you go through your renaissance and enlightenment, if you have your Michelangelo and Mozart and Voltaire. (...) But, for us, it is maybe bit different. For us being child not so far back. For those who stand on Europe’s battlements all of last 600 years. (42)

Her interpretation is well familiar to ‘other’ Europeans. The idea of catching up with the West and of providing proof positive that we ‘belong’ to ‘Europe’ has repeatedly shaped local cultural discourses. Edgar apparently means us to adopt a sceptical attitude to Pecz’s reasoning.

*Pentecost* is likewise highly critical of some of the more unsavoury consequences of the Balkan Anonymiana’s love affair with (Western) Europe. As was already pointed above, contempt for ‘non-Europeans’ is one of those. In the play’s closing episodes, a multinational group of refugees take over the church. Pecz, Davenport and their American colleague Leo Katz become their hostages. The refugees are labelled ‘terrorists’ by ‘our country’s’ officials and numerous attempts are made to make them give up before armed commandoes pour in through a hole in the wall, where the disputed painting should have been, and shoot most people on sight. Before the action reaches its sanguinary climax, however, a multiethnic community is established in the church. In this way the building is, as it were, re-consecrated as a temple of mutual respect and civilised understanding and its long history of violence and exclusion is negated.

In this morally exemplary atmosphere, Davenport comes up with a new interpretation of the painting and of the history of Western art. Because the anonymous artist used a dye that only became known in Western Europe centuries later, the British art historian assumes that he was an Arab who tried his hand at figurative painting. His painting then provided a model for Giotto’s (53). It would appear, then, that one of the distinctive movements in Western culture, the Renaissance, was ‘started’ by someone from the East. Interestingly, ‘our country’ is (yet again!) left out of the grand march of history. In Davenport’s revolutionary re-telling of the story of Western art, it only figures as the meeting ground of Western and (truly) Eastern geniuses. The irony implicit in the British art historian’s cultural scheme is never permitted to come to the surface. Characteristically, Davenport tells his story in a general context of storytelling: while waiting, the refugees kill time by telling each other stories that could be traced back to a shared, ‘all-human’ stock of narratives comprising scattered fairy tales as well as portions of the Ramayana (53-55).

David Edgar’s play attempts the deconstruction of some of the West’s privileged concepts as well as versions of the traditional dichotomy
between East and West. However, despite all grand iconoclastic gestures, it remains within the charmed circle of Eurocentrism. This is borne out by the anonymity of the play's setting and the presentation of 'our country's' history as a mixture of all the negative traits the West has traditionally attributed to the Balkans. Moreover, while the representatives of the 'real' (i.e. non-Christian and extra-European) East are portrayed with sympathy and understanding, the inhabitants of 'our country' hardly ever rise above the level of inept cartoon figures. Gabriella Pecz is (arguably) the only exception. Even the play's defiant gesture of 'orientalising' the Renaissance turns out to be, in the last analysis, futile: the existence of Giotto's Arab precursor remains only hypothetical and the painting is destroyed before the serious work of re-writing Western (and world) art history can begin.

Conclusion

My reading of the four texts clearly illustrates the difficulties that must needs accompany cultural translation. The old ghosts of Orientalism and Occidentalism were shown to haunt the discourse of the four authors under discussion. Those monsters apparently refuse to go away and staking them through the heart is not an easy task. The post-Enlightenment ideological legacy with its emphasis on a unified and assimilationist image of the 'other' Europe vampirically draws life from the postmodern present. The solution, if, indeed, one may presumptuously assume that a solution may be found, does not lie in telling writers how to write or in mentorially instructing them not to write. This I know for sure from my experience as an Eastern European who has lived under a totalitarian regime. Reading texts and involving their creators in an intercultural dialogue, albeit indirectly, may be an ethically better way of laying the old ghosts to rest.

Irina Kabanova

The two texts to be compared here have already attracted critical attention. Tim Parks's ninth novel Europa was on the Booker Prize shortlist for 1997. Anastasia Gosteva's first publication 'Samurai's Daughter' was awarded one of many Russian literary awards, the Znamia magazine prize for the best 1997 debut in fiction. I intend to focus on the concepts of Europe as they are manifested in both texts explicitly and implicitly, in spatial forms. I shall argue that though vastly different, British and Russian views of Europe in the 1990s are equally vague in the dictionary sense of the word: 'not explicit, imprecise; not clearly perceptible or discernible; indistinct.' Methodologically, this paper owes most to the works of Y.M. Lotman and the Tartu school on the semiotics of space, as well as to Caren Kaplan's Questions of Travel. Postmodern Discourses of Displacement.