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## Europe without Borders: Questioning the Idea of a Common European Identity

**Abstract:** This paper aims to examine the effectiveness of the matrices of a common European identity in the European Union acts that promote this idea. This paper sets out the thesis that practical implementation of what is meant by the motto “Europe without borders” encounters at least two serious obstacles: the first related to the tendency of externalizing the violence and to see beyond the boundaries of the European Union, for example in the Balkans as another Europe, and the second is related to the asymmetry of the memory of Europe. Direct consequence of this situation is the sense of not belonging, marginalization and segregation of Europe. This thesis is examined by interpreting the implications of this sense in the process of creating cultural products in Macedonia. The ability to complete the project “Europe without borders” is considered in terms of participation of national identity and culture, seen through the analysis of artistic body of work by Milcho Manchevski (movies “Before the Rain” and “Dust”) and the literary opus by Tashko Georgievski (novels “Black Seed” and “Flat Land”). The phenomenon of outsourcing the violence which refers to the subject-object relationship in culture and the phenomenon of asymmetry memory is also examined. In conclusion, it’s suggested that if Europe desires to realize allied, shared European identity, Europe must propose advanced matrixes for that reason. In this context, every political decision must include ethical consideration.

**Keywords:** European identity, national identity, externalization of violence, asymmetry of memory, film, novel, Milcho Manchevski, Tashko Georgievski

The Declaration on European Identity, signed in 1973, implied a clear political agreement between the EU member states in terms of constituting a new identity, which would not only refer to economic competitiveness and the strengthening of Europe's political power, so as to have a more equal footing in reaching decisions on global politics/political in the then binary divided world (between the Soviet Union and the United States), but also to oversee the identity matrixes of the individuals marked by the given, so-called European identity. If in the 1970s, the Declaration on European Identity was a problem-free field that the 9 EU member states used in order to reflect on the idea of creating a sort of external political identity based on common (shared) values and principles<sup>1</sup>, its implementation, vis-à-vis the

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<sup>1</sup> In the very beginning, the EU did not voice the question about the building of a common (shared) European identity. The reasons behind this, according to Dario Čepo, were varied: starting with how the forging of an identity was of no consequence to the goals of the EU, which was formed due to economic reasons, to be run by the political elites and not the citizens, all the way to the belief that the so-called ripple effect from the economic to the other spheres (the political, the cultural, the social), would automatically lead to shared points of interest. However, these kinds of beliefs would soon prove obsolete, particularly at times when establishing the need to carry out decisions with greater and faster efficiency. The initial principle of a consensus in reaching decisions was replaced with the principle of outvoting, which has brought into question the sovereignty of the nation-states and their citizens. Henceforth, the need for greater participation on the behalf of the citizens in the decision-making processes outside the national realm, which in turn, proved that the invalidity of the belief that the common (shared) European identity, is an irrelevant issue. This "identity absence"

processes of globalization and the question of the cultural diversity of the member states, as well as vis-à-vis the question of the Union's expansion with new member states conducted under the motto "Europe without Borders", did in fact result in dilemmas and diverging opinions.

It feels only proper to remind ourselves, at this stage, that the Declaration of the Union self-marks itself as "the initiator of an entirely new and legally funded order", which is based on "functional multilateralism". This multilateralism presents itself as the ethnical corrective to US's Unitarianism and the Soviet Union's regional hegemony. "Such a missionary undertaking and role by/of the Union directly stems from her principal determination, that multilateralism as such is acceptable, desired and globally useful." (Ilić, <[---

is made evident by the clash which exists surrounding the value concepts that fuel the so-called "European spirit". "Namely, it's been proven that the differences existing around the build-up of society are rather vast and insurmountable \(...\) The forging of a common \(shared\) identity, which in turn, should derive from the fundamentally different concepts about social upkeep \(whether dealing with the relationship towards the socially sensitive and marginalized groups, or family values, or something else\) proved almost impossible." The EU, faced with such problems – that in order for its strong build-up to become a reality there needs to be a consensus of the people – opens up the question about the shared identity through a series of measures \(the strengthening of communications, the introducing of common \(shared\) symbols, such as a flag, an anthem, a currency\). \(Čepo, "Od Nacionalnog k Supranacionalnom: Evropski Identitet i Evropska Unija", <<http://tripalo.hr/knjige/Nacldent/cepo.pdf>>\)](http://evrodijalog.eu/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/RP-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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It becomes thus evident that the EU member states, at this time, doubt not the power of international law and the potential of international institutions to initiate and create a more just world order which could rest on the basic criterion – *fair and just treatment for all*. Europe could also be the agent to implement this more just system, but only if united, since “Europe must unite and speak increasingly with one voice if it wants to make itself heard and play its proper rôle in the world.” (Declaration on European Identity, <<http://www.cvce.eu/viewer/-/content/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/en>>) Consequently, 30 years after, particularly after the start of the Union’s expansion process, behind the motto “Europe without Borders”, the initially problem-free and acceptable attitudes presented in the Declaration would become the impetus for numerous debates, exactly the two aforementioned postulates: the fair and equal treatment of all, and ‘the unification, that is, having one voice’. Within the frames of the Union itself, the practical implication of these assertions proved a rather complex process, which at present seems out of our reach: the former foregrounds *the different interests of the member states*, therefore, the use of power rather than the implementation of the set criteria, whereas the latter voiced the unpreparedness of the member states to reach a compromise *vis-à-vis their cultural specificities and distinctions*. The former ushered the political debate surrounding

the question of the extent to which the Union is to be extended, namely, if a “Europe without Borders” includes the entire geographical territory of Europe and the question surrounding imperialism, whereas the latter announced the debate surrounding cultural unification in conditions of integration.<sup>2</sup>

A direct consequence of such a condition has further contributed to having the Euro-skeptics as the more vocal of the two camps. Unlike the reactions which run along the lines of the daily political gambit (by the political elites or the journalists inclined to either one or the other of the camp sides, mostly resulting in further labeling and name-calling, the Euro-skeptics vs. the Europhiles, without any degree of analysis), of the ever more present Euro-skepticism, both on the behalf of the citizens of the member states<sup>3</sup>, as well

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<sup>2</sup> The knowledge that the feeling of a cultural belonging is a necessary precondition for the establishing of a stable internal market had forced the EU Commission and Parliament to place the question about the common (shared) identity on the pressing agenda. The more vocal opinions ran along the lines that the idea that European culture is older than any national one, namely, that belonging to a European identity can be considered a product of the integration of the many national, regional, and local cultures (Banus, 2002: 164). This kind of an attitude comes across obstacles when the same aspects of European culture are interpreted and read differently in the different European states, but also due to the problematic nature, the old model of the geopolitical tradition for deriving the cultural identity (Ninkovich, 2003: 99).

<sup>3</sup> After the European Constitution failed to be voted in, and the realization that the results of the Euro-barometer were unfavorable in terms of acknowledging the idea of a common European identity on the behalf of the Union’s member states, it’s become quite clear that there is an increasing fear attached

as the candidate-countries, this paper wishes to point out the reasons behind the ever more so present *feeling of un-belonging, of being marginalized and segregated*, among the EU candidate-countries. This, I believe, points out that the goal of the EU – a united Europe as a strong political, economic and cultural agent on the world stage – through the process of constructing a common (shared) European identity, as well as realizing the motto “Europe without Borders”, at present, has proven *impossible*. To realize a shared, beyond-the-national identity can only come about if the already established national identities which enter into relationships with the other national identities, both within and without the EU (for example, with the Russian one, the Ukrainian one, with the identities of the candidate-countries, etc.). This European identity can be constituted and accepted only through the process of interaction, both with the identities of the member-states, as well as with the identities of the other European countries, including the Macedonian identity.

This study is an attempt at answering the question – what kinds of implications does the aforementioned sentiment of non-belonging hold in the process of creating cultural products in Macedonia and what

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to this idea. The obstacles faced in realizing the project “Europe without Borders” are now not only witnessed in the counties, which due to their failure to carry out the tasks set by the Union (namely, due to their ‘insufficient progress’) cannot be integrated inside its frames, but also through the Union’s own identification with its own structure and make-up.

are the ramifications of such an analysis in terms of the EU’s attempts to effectuate its goal? The answers to this complex question can be reached if we take a closer look at the relations which position the Macedonian identity within the context of the European one, whereas certain results can be reached also through an analysis of the cultural products in Macedonia that thematize said relations.

### **An Externalization of Violence – a Theoretical Framework**

By further actualizing Ole Wæver’s thesis (1998: 69-118) about Europe’s war-filled past as a referential point for the creation of the post-war European identity<sup>4</sup>, while examining Thomas Diez’ theory, Ana Pejchinova identifies two possible conceptual directions for the realization of the idea about a common European identity: a geopolitical and a temporal one. By defining violence as the “human potential for conflict; this includes physical, economic, political and social violence, as well as the violence of unconcern,” Pejchinova believes that the EU, faced with the disunity amidst its own ranks, will proceed to pave the way towards “the European identity” along the lines of two trajectories – a Europe it wishes to be, in other words “a peacebuilding, self-reflective

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<sup>4</sup> This opinion is also shared by Novak (2004: 79), who believes that the history of Europe is a history of war conflicts, from ancient times all the way to the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

and self-critical entity”, and a Europe it can turn into once again, i.e., “an entity of which peacemaking may be reduced to pacification of its own territory, while its violence would be externalized, i.e. it would be projected at the margins of the society and across the geopolitical borders of the Union.” (Pejchinova, <<http://www.anapejcinova.org/Articles/Imaginingeurope.htm>>). This differentiation stems from the so-called geopolitical<sup>5</sup> and temporal<sup>6</sup> othering. The former has been defined as a creative imperative in the process of creating national identities, and is now perceived as unfavorable, an anachronistic matrix which helps establish a homogenous identity. This identity is thus twice violent: it alienates geopolitical entities, suppressing heterogeneity inside its ranks, and it isolates the integral parts of a subjective ‘self’. The latter has been defined as self-reflective, and as such, according to Diez, quite favorable and welcomed. Temporal othering does not pose a threat for the other synchronic groups; rather it refers only to a diachronic particularization of the self – the past aspect (the violent one) and the present aspect (the peacebuilding one). According to Diez, this model is less violent due to the more open form of the ‘I’ which continuously,

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<sup>5</sup> Geopolitical: based on the differentiation between the synchronic Otherness, where identity appears as a sum of negative definitions (‘I am that which the Other is not’).

<sup>6</sup> Temporal: a diachronic differentiation, where the collective identity is created through a negative definition of a past ‘I’, while the constitutive principles of self-creation are traced in that which is the opposite of the differentiated (old and rejected) ‘I’.

critically, searches for itself and reevaluates its own self, through the reflection of the self-creation it produces. Or, in Pejchinova’s words “this is Europe which is not, but Europe which can be, the wished for Europe of Diez, Wæver and other leading minds.”

(Pejchinova, <<http://www.anapejcinova.org/Articles/Imaginingeurope.htm>>).

I consider the so-called temporal othering, as seen by Diez, to be the positive direction, but I also agree with Pejchinova when she references “the externalization of violence”, which, in the thus envisioned concept, is projected on the margins of Europe. The questions she asks, namely to what extent is Europe truly non-violent, as it wishes to represent itself, and, whether conventional warfare is the only real form of violence, reveal the darker side of the concept of temporal othering. Since the self-reflexive act of discarding violence, on the behalf of the EU, is accompanied by the non-reflexive externalization of violence, which is again a form of violence, now masked through the discourse of non-violence, hidden and thus far more dangerous. Or, in Pejchinova’s words, “By *externalization of violence* I understand a process of transfer of violent activities (of military, economic, political, cultural, ecological and “unconcerned” character) in two directions: on one side, at the margins of the community within the Union, and on the other side, over the borders of the Union. This includes externalization of physical violence (e.g. clandestine military operations, economic profiting on

wars abroad, sponsorship of foreign armed factions), externalization of economic violence (e.g. off-shore banking and use of tax havens, use of underage and cheap labour force without social protection), externalization of irrationality (e.g. extremism, religious and ethnic violence) and immorality (e.g. sex-tourism). By externalization I do not mean simply export of a product or a practice, but also the export of the discourse of violence, of the perception of the possibility and illegitimacy of violent behaviour, at the margins of the society and across the territorial borders. This possibility (and *a priori* suspicion of practice) is thus ascribed exclusively to the Others, while one's own subject position is non-reflectively treated as violence-free, and therefore responsibility-free. (Pejchinova, <<http://www.anapejcinova.org/Articles/Imaginingeurope.htm>>). The kind of effect the tendency to externalize violence through the concept of temporal othering can be observed more closely through an analysis of the film opus of Manchevski's.

***Before the Rain and Dust* by Milcho Manchevski:  
Or, When the Object Becomes a Subject**

Western critics took a different take when reviewing two of Manchevski's feature films, namely *Before the Rain* (1994) was awarded "The Golden Lion" at the Venice Film Festival, whereas *Dust* (2001) was given the cold shoulder. The fact that both films were technically well-conceived of, that

both films were successful co-productions, that both films thematized the relationship East-West, i.e., that they indeed share a few meeting points, voices the following question – why did Western critics give them such polarized reviews? The factography of the Western critical reception of the film *Dust* marks a series of similar statements. The initial reviews came out during the first press conferences at the Venice Film Festival. Quite telling is the half-question posed by Alexander Walker of London's "Evening Standard": "You've made a racist film, one which portrays the Turks in a negative light. This has obviously been made with the aim of hindering Turkey's candidacy for the European Union. What do you have to say about this?"

Furthermore, Peter Bradshaw from London's "The Guardian" called *Dust* "a special pleading for Macedonian nationalism" (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2001/sep/01/venicefilmfestival2001>).

In Germany, the critic Jan Schultz of "Der Tagesspiegel" sees the film as "anti-Albanian"; however, "instead of Albanian Muslims, we are faced with Turks, depicted as blood-thirsty, whereas Macedonians are the innocent lambs, and the black man is no other than The West which needs be awakened to the fanfares so as to enter the fight against Islam. The aesthetics of the killers, as the Turks have been represented, contains something neo-fascist within, which is the scandalous part!" Similar comments came from the Balkans as well.

The Croatian “Jutarnji List”, a month before the Venice Film Festival, through the quill of the renowned Bosnian writer Miljenko Jergović, will publish a review, whence he accuses Manchevski of “Macedonian nationalism, not realizing the historical ramification of the circumstances and the position of Albanians.”

A whole stack of reviews and reflection pieces about the film emphasize the domination of violence in the film. Amongst the rest, David Stratton too, the critic for the Hollywood trade-paper “Variety”, who says: “it’s too arty to cut it as a violent action pic and too gore-spattered to appeal to the arthouse crowd”. (<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=review&reviewid=VE1117798762&categoryid=31&cs=1>)

Interpretative strategies which can be deduced from the aforementioned coordinated readings are: unbearable violence, racism, nationalism, a film which takes on an Anti-Albanian/Anti-Turkish stance; in other words, all types of interpretation whose referential point is intolerance and violence in the real world, all which inside the model of a temporal othering, while constructing a common (shared) European identity, has to be an instance from the past that the present, in its efforts towards integration, needs to distance itself from.

The analysts who disagree with such commentary, basing their review on several sources, saw said interpretations as a premeditated and well-orchestrated ‘attack’ of the film. The following question beckons: why such an apparent need to strategize

over a consensual reading of *Dust*, particularly when Manchevski was already accepted by the Western cinematography world as a new star? What exactly has the film produced as knowledge, which in turn causes panic amidst the Western lines, something which had to be sanctioned due to an effort to eliminate danger?

In order to answer this question perhaps it’s best that we start by taking a closer look at *Before the Rain*. Its story: photographer Aleksandar Kirkov (played by Rade Serbedzija) returns to Macedonia from Great Britain; there he is made witness to a horrific set of events - incredible hatred and violence between two sides/families (the Macedonian and the Albanian one), the result of a commonly accepted rule from patriarchal morality, one still alive and present in the Balkans, namely, the ban on love between ethnic and religious groups and people. The consequences are tragic: fear, murder, victims on both sides. “In front of us stretches the dirty, primitive, behind the times Western Balkan, a Balkans riddled with violence and fratricide, at a time when it indeed was the site of an absurd war. In it, evil, violence and bloodshed are just a part of the Balkan lifestyle, and only he who has spent time away from it, who has embraced/lived in the West (the photographer, the *gastarbeiter* Aleksandar Kirkov) can exact justice, looking rationally and humanly. The Others possess neither the ability nor the legitimacy to do so.” (Fusnota). By internalizing the norms and values of the West, Aleksandar is in fact a

representative of the Western world view. His position in the world of the film can be defined as that of ‘an innocent bystander’, who does not take part in the events and thus bears no responsibility. Henceforth, I find it particularly telling that the filmmaker chooses photography as the profession for this character of a returning immigrant with an established Western world view: like his camera, which serves as his primary tool, he ‘objectively’ and ‘truthfully’ observes the events all in search of the truth. As the character says so himself at one instance “The West does not choose sides”, for he too is a victim of the Balkan havoc and evil, represented through the scene of slaughter in a London restaurant, caused by a suspicious type who speaks in one of the Balkan languages. This precise world view of a victim, on the one hand, legitimizes the presence of the West in the Balkans, whereas on the other, it enables the transference of violence, once, in the past, also present in the West, now without its borders, somewhere on the margins of Europe, in the Balkans, in Europe’s Other. This very Other allows for the construction of the West’s ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ world view, for the West needs a blood-thirsty Other, a Balkans, so that in turn, it can be constituted as an ‘innocent’ victim, thus distancing the West from the said violence and having it declare its peace-building identity. This perspective that the film takes coincides with the official self-identification of the West, nee the EU (at times joined by the US as well), and thus allows *Before the Rain* to showcase “the earned success, while only a few found fault with the ‘men with machine

guns’ represented in Macedonia, at a time when such people were not at all found there. However, Western critics loved these ‘men with machine guns’ (Fisnota). For the West, *Before the Rain* was a politically correct film, so a film star could be born. With *Dust*, the great artist from *Before the Rain*, in the eyes of the West, had become a subversive artistic, and by that account, dangerous. The star had to be shot down!

In the words of Slapsak, “Manchevski needed seven years to make his second feature film. Obviously, a certain time had to pass so that he would outgrow the somewhat naïve belief in the Balkan evil which permeated from his debut film *Before the Rain*, and perhaps think twice about what he may need more: a prestigious film award or his intellectual integrity.” (Svetlana Slapsak: Luke Balkanwalker Shoots Down Corto Maltese: Milcho Manchevski’s *Dust* As An Answer to the Western Cultural Colonialism, [www.manchevski.com/docs/2\\_luke\\_balkanwalker\\_slapsak\\_eng.pdf](http://www.manchevski.com/docs/2_luke_balkanwalker_slapsak_eng.pdf))

The story of *Dust* unfolds through the memory of an old woman named Angela, who in her apartment in New York City forces the young black thief to hear her life story, namely, how she came to NYC, as a baby, all the way from Macedonia. Thus, the film takes place in two temporal plains (at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup>), and in two locations, the USA and Macedonia. Her storytelling entwines two narratives, that of her parents who in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fight against the Ottoman rule and the unruly bands of robbers who

pillage Macedonia, and that of the two brothers and a prostitute, a love triangle, out of the US. The place where the two tales intersect is Macedonia: one of the brothers (Luke) takes shelter there, a penance for his sin of adultery, equally motivated by a search for gold. Instead of the aforementioned gold, he chances upon Angela, the infant daughter of the leader of the resistance who has been named *Daskalot* (in old Macedonian, it means The Teacher). The two narrative strands and the two temporal planes, through an analogy with the images of violence in present-day New York, show the semblance between the two worlds (the East and the West), or the entire perversion about the peace-building West vis-à-vis the violent East. Instead of revealing 'the truths', Manchevski offers a Balkan version of/on violence, seen equally in the past, and in the East and in the West, as well as in their distinct presents. Manchevski's powerful film represents also something the West wishes to have not seen: a powerful storyteller and rebel against Western discourse, a subject who interprets the world, giving it meaning. In this version of the East-West narrative, the West is neither innocent nor neutral nor non-violent.

For the rational West who asked of the Balkans to systemize itself, with the aim of displaying a clear image of what over there, on the periphery of Europe, in a space which is a hodge-podge of a hybrid, had in fact taken place and is still ongoing, Manchevski places Balkan memory inside the imaginary,

inside myth, inside a story, not with the intention of representing reality, but with a willingness to explore narratives, discourses, ideologies. Instead of being guided by the interests of "the constituted/the story/the truth", as Kramarić says (2009: 111), he is seduced by questions regarding "performance/discourse/effects". Questions regarding the plausibility and truthfulness have now been replaced by questions regarding "the political-ethnic effects" of the narrative/film. That which this film has brought with it as key realization delves deeply into the relations East-West, and in turn positions the entire impossibility about 'objectivity', 'truthfulness', so that the West is revealed as the East's equivalent, both in the past and today. The negative projection about Europe's (the West's) Other with this film loses its legitimacy. The once Wild West remains equally wild as the present-day Wild East, tearing down the rules governing power and imagination as set up and controlled by the West. Through Manchevski's film, the Balkans is no longer the subject of study, rather a subject which has its own strategies to deconstruct the ways with which the West gets to conquer/rule, namely, by constructing binary oppositions whence the powerful West acquires for itself the positive side of the pair, and in the said case, also the side of a competent evaluator of the given circumstances. Manchevski flips around this Western culture, "so that all of its seams are out in the open, all of the strategies of the colonial manipulation. This is exactly what Manchevski has accomplished

with his film. This well-known carnivalization approach, which aims at showing how one machine functions from within, and thus release all of the pressure, rarely finds a positive answer by the disclosed side.” (Slapsak) Manchevski’s film is subversive, particularly in terms of the pairing subject/object. The liberation of the object and its transition from object into the position of a subject/interpreter is a painful process since it questions competence. The object which had become a subject/interpreter, and with that an authority that can explicate, puts into question the competence of the former subject, which in this case is the West/Europe, and with that the latter loses its innocence and wisdom, i.e., it loses its legitimacy for self-identification in terms of the attributes like peace-building and righteous.

That Manchevski is aware of what he has produced can be traced through the reception the film received from the Western European critics. Isn’t this violence outside the realm of the film, a violence which brings into question the competence of the reviewers? To reduce a complex artistic structure so as it would fit the daily political needs (which I’ve pointed out, I hope, clearly masks something far greater), to skim over the many new signs Manchevski has created so as to combat the simplified explanation and understanding of ‘the Balkan conditions’, cannot but have a reversed effect on the one who is conducting the evaluating/judging. *Dust’s* subversion is so powerful that it cannot be just suppressed, hence, the fervor/vehemence that accompanies its reactions. It

voices the question about ‘male’ (meaning, the one with power) selfishness, and irresponsibility in the narrative, granted through the memories of the three female characters, Liliith, Neda and Angela. But what I find even more telling is Manchevski’s projection on the future, given through the transference of Angela’s body, from Macedonia to the US, and back again, a transfer which symbolically marks the spot of collective memory. In place of gold (which lights off the transfer), Angela ascertains her position as a subject, one whose competences are intact, “a privilege earned through a long history of negotiations and struggles, which oftentimes, quite openly can culminate into an open political struggle” (Slapsak). The end result of this struggle delegitimizes the Western narrative about a shared European identity as peace-building and just, thus, consequently, speaks to the invalidity this narrative effectuates, and how under the given circumstances, a common European identity is quite impossible. This is the knowledge which this film comes to pass, one that points out *the need for new strategies when constituting the identity matrixes of the integrated European identity*.

Henceforth, self-reflexive rejection of one’s own violent past is in and of itself an act of violence, which is exactly what the reception of Manchevski’s film teaches us. Certainly, this violence does not belong amidst the conventional forms of violence, but it is sufficient enough to point out the incongruity of the peace-building imaginary identity of Europe, which projects violence onto the Other. Such a strategy

unquestioningly and tryingly reminds Europe of its “violent and nationalist colored past, which she painstakingly wishes to distance itself from” (Pejchinova), which again points out to the need to self-reflect over its own violence so as to reach the gesture of peace-building.

### **Can a Subject Become an Object?**

On the other hand, each power position (including the one which enables someone to be the subject that symbolically marks the world, while someone to be the object that is marked by said subject) is not give for an eternity; rather, it has to be, continuously and constantly, conquered anew through negotiations. Hence, we could easily image a situation where a given subject is turned into an object. The reaction of the said subject, which has been turned, this way or that, into an object, coincides with what Manchevski carries out in the film *Dust*. This is also supported by Gianni Vattimo, who in an article titled “Is there a European identity?“, while speaking about the European versus the American identity, asks what exactly makes Europeans European? He deduces that it is really about the feeling of superiority which is in no way tied to EU membership, an organization he views, first and foremost as a trade community (a European community about coal and seal, then as a community with a shared market place), which in fact had helped with “not having any wars repeat between

the countries of the old continent, thus enabling Europe into becoming a true competitor economic region”. (Vattimo, <<http://okno.mk/node/3667>>, my translation) Such pragmatic reasons, which oftentimes have radically opposing interests, are not sufficient enough to make use ‘feel European’. In Vattimo’s perspective, for this to happen, we need “a pinch of soul”, namely we need to make **an ethical decision**, i.e., “we must admit and explicitly articulate the reasons why we became aware that being European is indeed something particular; this is more important, more vital than our belonging to a Union which is still in the making.” (Vattimo, <<http://okno.mk/node/3667>>, my translation)

By pointing out Donald Rumsfeld’s statement that “Old Europe” can be thrown out of the game since it is not capable of keeping up with the times, and that “New Europe” is comprised of those countries which are ready to take part in the coalition, Vattimo vehemently reacts to the act of excluding “Old Europe”, which he feels deserves most credit for the birth of the idea that gave life to the European Unions, and to the act of treating Europe as an object which has to be described by another, “more progressive” one: “Truth be told, we were mostly angered by the fact that the Bush administration’s supporters were the ones making the decisions about Europe, and they – with the exception of France, Germany, as well as Italy – left the impression of betrayers of the European spirit, the way we had grown accustomed to seeing it

being represented. That which Rumsfeld and Bush call Europe is equated to the values which we do not feel as part of our own; and we find ourselves evoking feelings of just the opposite, an awareness of what Europe 'truly' is. (...) Europe, which carries the plight of history (...) does not manage to think of the state just in this subsidiary form." ((Ватимо, <http://okno.mk/node/3667>).

I wholeheartedly agree with Vattimo in terms of "a pinch of soul", in other words, an ethical stake in the matter, but I also believe that this is a criterion which should apply for all, and not just 'the privileged'.

### **Establishing a Relationship with One's Own History**

If one of the reasons which renders the European identity at present impossible is the externalization of violence, another one, which I'd like to spend some time analyzing, that seems vital in the process of realizing the idea "Europe without Borders" is the question regarding Europe's relationship to its own history. Here we'll go to an EU document I find particularly relevant. The 1992 EU Treaty, which represents the normative frame, among other things, states the following:

1. that the creation of a European identity is based on "the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law", as well as the principles all

the member-states share in common, and which emphasize the need for a process that will help create a stronger union down the road;

2. a clearly pronounced desire to have solidarity among its people, by "respecting their history, their culture and their traditions", and
3. the resolve that the Union will affirm its internal identity through "the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity". (The Treaty on European Union, 1992).

This clearly attests to the understanding that the EU has been envisioned as a space where freedom, safety and justice reign supreme. If we start with the following thesis, namely that by present-day legal ramifications (the TEU), European identity has been defined as a process of creating a unity, whence freedom, democracy and the respect for human rights are the key values, together with a commitment towards the afforded respect for the history, culture and traditions of each nation, then the call for cultural collaboration between the countries of Europe becomes a necessity. Henceforth, the need for a better mutual meet-and-greet, and a spreading of the culture and the history of European nations, as well as protecting the cultural legacy as a common value of all of the European countries. It's logical to see this investment towards respect and encouragement

of the cultural differences as cultural wealth, and not as an obstacle in the process of creating a European identity. But there is a historical and socio-psychological problem (aspect) to European identity. The question regarding the ambivalent treatment of the EU of history rises to the surface, namely, its production of rules about what should and what should not be remembered from its own past, vis-à-vis what must be forgotten. Does Western Europe (or to borrow from Rumsfeld's terminology, 'Old Europe'), as part of the strategies for the externalization of one's violence without one's back yard, forget the past, instead of claiming responsibility for the fallen victims?

### **The Asymmetry of Memory**

In the article titled, "Battlefield Europe. Transnational memory and European identity", Claus Leggewie writes, that in order for Europe to deal with the common political problems it has to develop a Pan-European awareness, which in turn must deal with the issue of the European memory. His thesis rests on the notion that this European memory cannot be simply reduced to the experiences surrounding the Holocaust and the Gulags, but that it must include "the experience of expulsion", which includes also the issue of Europe's colonial history. It, according to Leggewie, must be able to "be able to compare memories without offsetting each against the other"

(Leggewie, <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-04-28-leggewie-en.html>>).

The theoretical frameworks already present make it quite clear: that the powers which ascertain which stories are to be told and which are not do so without any merit. This very relationship, of permission and restraint, in terms of the telling of certain stories/narratives is that which produces discourse, a process Michel Foucault calls "controlled, selected, organized". The powers which control the production of said discourse are not given to us once and for all, which is why a re-allocation of power through various procedures is made possible. "In society such as our own we all know the rules of *exclusion*. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is prohibited. We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything when we like or where we like" (Foucault, 1982: 216). Resting on the laurels of postcolonial theory, Zlatko Kramarić points to the relationship between the exclusion (or ban) of certain stories and the community's character, concluding that it "unambiguously showcases the totalitarian character of the community." The temporary suspension of certain cultural practices (or their postponement) leads "postcolonial theoreticians to the following conclusion, namely that the power of telling only certain stories (those which have been allowed a telling) in a given society is in fact key to the relationship governing culture and imperialism"

(Kramarić, 2009: 133). However, as postcolonial criticism has taught us, the repression of stories which deal with a traumatic past or the so-called unpleasant episodes (Kramarić, 2009:155), cannot help solve the problems we face today. Literature in general, the novel form in particular, has the kind of power which continuously reminds us of the past, or as Dominick LaCapra terms it, “a past reality...is an inference from textual traces in the broad sense” (LaCapra, 2001: 21). Particularly with novels that are presented as a kind of a recollection, we could establish an analogy between literature, which ultimately speaking is an opportunity to represent past trauma, and trauma, which then could be defined as a crisis of representation. It, literature that is, mobilizes all those mechanisms necessary to animate the politics of re-memory, since, as Kramarić says, it allows for the overcoming of trauma, for realizing what trauma holds within, and with that, similar to psychoanalysis, and with that, much akin to psychoanalysis, get it resolved in the end through a fictional reconstruction of the source it sprang out of. Striking a parallel with the processes of psychoanalysis when treating trauma victims, Kramarić states that “by establishing a continuous story the patient at the same time begins to take charge (or at least believe that has started to take charge) of the world around him, and through the way he writes about it, he simultaneously constitutes himself as a complete subject. Namely, trauma will be overcome only when the survivor develops a new social ‘scheme’ that would help him make sense of all

those past events (...) Thus, we could freely ascertain that narration, on the one hand, helps us to control the ‘world’, whereas on the other hand, it participates actively in creating our perceptions of it.” (Kramarić, 2009: 135). If these realizations are used in the context of a collective, of a community (in our case, Europe, united and borderless), we are then free to ascertain that *in order for Europe to be constructed as a complete subject we need a new social scheme of understanding all that had happened in the past.* Consequently, the externalization of the violent past does not resolve the trauma, the same way as the forgetting/forbidding of certain stories cannot.

Therefore, when voicing the question of whether Europe can realize its common identity, and thus realize its goal – “Europe without Borders”, we cannot help but voice a follow-up question, namely, if there are narratives which have been ‘postponed’, i.e., if Europe is suppressing some of the traumatic parts of its past, moreover, why is it doing so? Is European memory asymmetrical?

In the aforementioned article by Claus Leggewie, the author writes that even though Europe has reflected on the “population transfers taking place across wide areas and affecting millions of people”, following the collapse of the great empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, up until the deportations due to the break-up of Yugoslavia, the dominant memory centers on the ethnic cleansing tied to the Holocaust. Although, according to Leggewie, the Holocaust experience is central, “a definition of European memory cannot

be reduced to the Holocaust and the Gulag alone”, i.e., “it must also include the experience of expulsion, (...) and be able to compare memories without offsetting each against the other. (Leggewie, <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-04-28-leggewie-en.html>>) The ethnic cleansings and expulsion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have a European dimension, and indeed represent a controversial point, which in turn affects the prospect for a common European identity. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, deportations and ethnic cleansings have appeared mostly where the process of nation- and state-creation would be taking place. Such a “collateral damage” in the process of creating states stems from the idea that both the internal and external safety and political legitimacy of the states themselves comes from an ethnically homogenized collective. Even though at present this idea has been, at least in theory, abandoned, practically speaking, it still rules, in one form or another, the mindset of people, thus producing bans of various types.<sup>7</sup> In this context, and in terms of the postulates of The Treaty on the European Union, for example, such as, each person’s right to their own history, culture and traditions, i.e., each person’s right to protect their interests, the following question emerges: Is the Republic of Macedonia granted this common principle? This

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most recent debates in Western Europe deals with the issue of whether Muslim women could be allowed to wear the traditional hijab (burka) in the countries of Western Europe, instigated by France’s decision to ban the wearing of the hijab in “public places” (for public use).

question, in turn, produces two more questions: Firstly, is this common principle at all possible, if the first and the second part (the right to history, culture, tradition, and the right to protect one’s own interest) are incompatible and mutually exclusive? And secondly, does Europe’s dividedness into the EU and the others produce insurmountable obstacles for there to be a just solution, and consequently leading to her unification?

My thesis, thus, centers around the notion that Europe’s integration can hardly be realized on the principles which the EU has prescribed thus far, and which in turn allow for (or even better produce) the exclusion of parts from its collective memory. Europe’s collective memory has been divided into as many variants as there are national cultures. The excluding of some at the expense of favorizing others cannot produce a collective identity.<sup>8</sup> Since we are dealing with sites of trauma (such as ethnic cleansing, concentration camp experiences, rape), which even

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<sup>8</sup> Along those lines, Leggewie remarks: “Initiatives such as the European Network of Memory and Solidarity campaign against a purely national and backwards-looking commemoration of the sort advocated, according to its critics, by the German Zentrum gegen Vertreibung (Centre Against Expulsion). In the course of the debate, the initiators of the centre, above all the League of Expellees, had to integrate a European and global dimension into events and exhibitions; thus the Centre could, in the end, form part of a European network. However it will probably be a long time before Poles and Germans can get used to the idea of jointly-authored school text books, as has become possible in the German-French case (albeit after a period of reconciliation lasting 40 years).

today ignite the passions as the process is far from complete, the controversial nature of the shared European memory becomes a bone of contention both in the internal and external politics. It produces conflicts within the frames of “Old Europe”, which had been considered already resolved. Amidst conditions of new conflicting interests the old “long-suppressed” scores emerge, contributing to the actualization of a so-called “authoritarian Right do[ing] battle for historical legitimacy” which is compensated by “an ethno-nationalist sentiment” (Leggewie) Therefore, questions tied to memory do not refer to the past as much as they point out current political problems. The question remains, can the “ethno-nationalizing sentiment” which induces conflicts be eliminated by having parts of the nations’ respective memories excluded, in this case parts of the Macedonian nation’s memory, or for that matter, will it continue to create conflicts until it becomes integrated in the collective memory? One possible answer to this rather complex question is given also through the opus of Tashko Georgievski.

### **The Novelistic Opus of Tashko Georgievski**

The novelistic opus of Tashko Georgievski (author of famous Macedonian novels, such as *People and Wolves* (Луѓе и волци), *Walls* (Сидови), *Black Seed* (Црно семе), *Winter’s Wind* (Змиски ветар), *A Time for Silence* (Време на молчење), *Flatlands* (Памна земја), *The Red Horse* (Црвенот коњ) introduces the

so-called “Aegean” theme in Macedonian literature, which refers to events set in a part of Greece, the Aegean Macedonia, in the period between 1946 and 1949, a period which historically has been called The Greek Civil War. Georgievski obsessively writes about the terror and the displacement of a part of the Macedonian people who lived on this territory. Namely, during the Second World War, the Macedonian people who lived in Greece, together with the Greek population, entered the fight against fascism, under the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. Yet, after the war’s ending, when the KKE (The Greek Communist Party) and ELAS (The Greek People’s Liberation Army), its partisan army, drove out the fascists and established their rule over the largest portion of Greece’s territory, the terrorizing over all those accomplices who took part in the National Republican Greek League movement commenced. Groups of armed Greeks, fascist collaborators, had enforced the law during the occupation, through violence, murder, rape, terror, which was particularly fierce in the areas populated by Macedonians. In this era of terror, not without the knowledge or support from the UK and the US, who had allied themselves with Greece’s royalist forces, the Greek Civil War represents the beginning of the Cold War, and the first victims: the members of the communist movement in Greece. In this era of terror, ‘death camps’ were set up, similar to those in Nazi Germany, which took the lives of thousands of communists, but also innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. Those lucky enough

to outlive the terror, around 56,000, were then forced to leave Greece. Around 40,000 of those were Macedonian.

The unifying theme of Georgievski's opus centers around the problem of the exiled man, one constantly faced with dire conditions, such as escaping near death, chaos, economic misery, lacking internal support due to being uprooted from his native land, from the familiar and loved spaces, now living in a psychological wasteland, a consequence of the persecution, torture, partings and loneliness. Such a condition with the novels' characters constitutes two life moods: a life lived through the memories which speak to the tragic past and a life of constant obsession and desire to reintegrate, to return to the hearth. The unlikelihood of this desire, the silence in front of the injustice, the indifference towards the crimes is what we encounter constantly in these characters-exiles.

The lived trauma and the subsequent exile produce several key symbols – the fog, the roots, the wall, the bones – which then are used to construct the image of the world of the exiled man. Those images possess a symbolic meaning and are transformed into a detailed metaphor, one of the search for the lost identity, represented through:

- the imagery of humiliation, punishment, violence and torture, which affects the crumbling of personal identity;
- the imagery of house destruction/burning (a symbol of man's cosmos, shelter and protection),

the destruction of the hearth (a symbol of a shared family life, of the home and the bond between a husband and a wife), the setting up of walls and borders (a symbol of separation between friends and loved ones, of the exiled/those who were lucky to survive, of broken communication), which affects the crumpling of the family identity and

- the imagery of chaotic, perilous situations, danger and fright, which affects the crumpling of the collective identity.

These images hinder the conceiving of the external borders as internal ones, which in turn represents the protection of the internal collective person that each one of us carries within, and "which allows us to inhabit time and space as the place which has always been and which will always be 'home'" (Kramarić, 2009: 112). Henceforth, the relationship between identity and memory is incontestable, which in turn begs an answer to the following question – what in fact is memory? Memory has been used to denote the contents of the past as they become present, and the process that brings the past into a present (King, 2001), as a substitute for History (Nora, 1978), and as complementary to history (Boodry, 2005). A distinction has also been made between social and historical memory (Halbwachs, 1980): social memory is regarded as the memory we have experienced personally (or a group to which a person belongs has experienced) whereas historical memory is perceived to be mediated through films and books. That which

the novels by Tashko Georgievski carry within as memory is the impossibility to encircle the round trail, starting from the Aegean Macedonia, Tashkent (USSR), Vojvodina (Serbia), Republic of Macedonia, and then again Aegean Macedonia, which the exiles travel through, not only due to an inconclusive past, but rather due to the consequences of that past in the given present, which are left open. Today, the openness of the so-called “Aegean Question” has far-reaching politically-ethnic ramifications and is a part of naming dispute the Republic of Greece has with the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, the traumatic past, which included torture, murder, exile, rape, has not been allowed any closure. And part of the process of creating a common European identity does include the recognition of past trauma in a way which would avert any denial. In such cases, the first element is “the need to transform the memory of trauma the closed memory, which obsessively sends us back to the tempoline memory. Therefore, once it is established that the past was really true, that it was not a nightmare, that it pervades our skin and that we recognize and accept what happened, we will know that it can be overcome. It is the awareness that it really happened and that we are not willing to let it ever happen again” (Purreza, 2002:158).

Three of the novels by Georgievski (from the aforementioned opus, that is, *Walls*, *The Black Seed*, *The Red Horse*) take place on “native land”, i.e., in Greece. This affords us the opportunity to question the difference the border makes vis-à-vis the subject’s

power to resist the violence which produces the dire existence. If on the other side of the border, in foreign lands, the character feels entirely disintegrated, on this side of the border, he demonstrates a big capacity for resistance, most clearly represented in the novel *Black Seed*. The novel’s key protagonist, Done Sofichanov, whose life story is traced throughout the other two novels, “is a paradigmatic example of the (un)successfulness of ‘the re-education/punishment’” (Kramarić, 2009: 114). Namely, in the death camp, a modern-day torture ground which only the perverted mind can produce, the Greek officer fails to convince Done to sign the piece of paper with which he would relinquish all bonds to the Communist Party. Done’s persistence is not motivated by his faith in communist ideals, rather simply, by his own truth – that he is a Macedonian and a villager who does not know/understand politics. With such a simple, unlearned, common human logic, he, loud and clear, opposes the torture, and his story becomes an equal to the one of the imperious Greek officer, for as long as he manages to find a way to withstand the torture. Since he, the ordinary unlearned commoner that he is, intuitively and from the experience learned in the camp (based on the example of his fellow villagers who had failed and signed the statement), knows well that by placing his signature on the piece of paper would lose his right to a voice, would lose the equality in the right to tell his own story. Since, as Žižek puts it, in concentration camp conditions “there is no room (...) for subjectivity” (Žižek, 2006: 2). This

right to speak is shared by the other characters who act in the realm of the “native land”. In *Walls*, this is enabled through the authorial narrator who favors the intimate, subjective drama of the character Adzigogo who takes on his perspective, whereas in *The Red Horse* the character speaks in the first person, so the storyline develops along the lines of the relationship between the lived and the narrated “I”. Henceforth, seen through the prism of narrative transmission, the Macedonian characters are the key information bearers the reader receives. The chance to tell his own tale, in fact, to publish a “counter-memory”, clearly points out the position of the victim, namely, it clearly demarks the borders of the perpetrators and the victims. On the other side of the border, in “the safe zone”, away from the camps and the terror, Done Sofichanov, as the rest of the exiled, loses this power. They become silent observers to that which is taking place, since they can neither locate themselves in the new found conditions, nor can they recognize ‘the enemy’. They, literally and metaphorically, live in a fog, in anticipation and tension, amidst the train stations and the freight cars.

The question which we need to articulate in this context is: What in fact takes place once the ‘native land’ is lost? Does the ‘native land’ entail that Tashko Georgievski “is no different than the 19<sup>th</sup> century patriot-romanticists who had located their dreams in the nation-state, something they found as sovereign?” (Kramarić, 2009: 112). My own reasoning lies along

the lines that the ‘native land’ stands as a metaphor about the impossibility to tell one’s own tale, about the stolen voice, about the silence which the exiles fact within and towards the others, and of the others towards them. It is a metaphor about the stolen opportunity to resist the returned unfavorable position, of the repeated, this time psychological terror resulting from the realization that no one is to blame for their condition. Neither Greece, for it too is a ‘victim’ of the Civil War, nor the West, for they have been ‘called upon’ to bring peace to Europe, nor the East, for it has ‘no jurisdiction’ over the given geopolitical space, nor Macedonia, for it as part of Yugoslavia has its own ‘priorities’. The silence replaces the terror, but the violence does not go away. It is read through the transformation of the subject into an object which withstands action but is incapable of acting himself. If on ‘native land’, even during conditions of camp life, the character had the right to a free choice (to sign or not to sign), and in his relationship with the Other could, although temporarily, find support points in order to stabilize his identity (Done possesses the knowledge about who he is – a Macedonian, a villager, and knowledge about who he is not – a communist), on the other side of the border, the exiles’ identity cannot locate such strongholds. There, they hold no right of choice, but are in turn controlled and led by an unfamiliar, invisible power center which decides in their name and speaks in their name. With that, the highly controlled speech of the exiles is only

made possible in the realm of the private. In public, it is neither heard nor remembered.

But what we fail to take into account is the fact that memory cannot be regulated “mnemo-technically”, i.e., only through official rituals. However, what can be carried out at an official level is “to establish a European way to remember past crimes together and to carefully extract lessons for present-day European democracies.” (Leggewie) I thus take the statement,

namely that it may be better for certain unpleasant events to be forgotten so that a common future may be forged, unacceptable. ‘The unpleasant events’ have to be addressed, so that they do not continue to be the bone of contention in the future, since it is impossible to create a stable society without making a critical re-evaluation of the past. For this is a lesson learned in Europe already, through the example of Germany accepting its responsibility for the Holocaust.

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**Лорета Георгиевска - Јаковлева**

## Европа без граници: идејата за заедничкиот европски идентитет под прашање

**Резиме:** Трудот има за цел да ја испита делотворноста на матриците за заеднички европски идентитет во актите на Европската Унија кои ја промовираат оваа идеја. Трудот ја поставува тезата дека практичното имплементирање на она што се подразбира под мотото „Европа без граници“ наидува на најмалку две сериозни пречки: првата поврзана со тенденцијата насилството да се екстернализира и да се види надвор од границите на Европската Унија, на пример на Балканот како Друг на Европа, а втората поврзана со асиметричноста на меморијата на Европа. Директна последица на ваквата состојба е чувството на неприпаѓање, маргинализација и сегрегација на дел од Европа. Тезтата се испитува преку толкување на импликации на ова чувство во процесот на создавање на културните производи во Македонија.

Можноста за потполна реализација на проектот „Европа без граници“ се разгледува од аспект на партиципацијата на македонскиот национален идентитет и култура, виден преку анализа на филмскиот опус на Милчо Манчевски (филмовите „Пред дождот“ и „Прашна“) и романиерскиот опус на Ташко Георгиевски (романите „Црно семе“ и „Рамна земја“). Се разгледува феноменот на екстернализација на насилството кој упатува на релацијата субјект-објект во културата и феноменот на асиметрија на меморијата. Во заклучокот се посочува дека ако Европа сака да ја реализира својата желба за заеднички, европски идентитет, мора да предложи други матрици. Во тој контекст, секоја политичка одлука мора да го вклучува етничкото прашање.

**Клучни зборови:** европски идентитет, национален идентитет, екстернализација на насилството, асиметричност на меморијата, филм, роман, Милчо Манчевски, Ташко Георгиевски

