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Martyna Bryla

1. Introduction: Where Are the Women?

1 In Joyce Carol Oates's short story, "My Warszawa: 1980" (1981) the main character, American writer and journalist, Judith Horne, comes to the Polish capital on a conference in American literature. She divides her time in Warsaw between the usual highlights of cultural diplomacy: meetings with the Writers' Union and cocktail receptions held by the American Embassy. At these meetings, which transpire in a haze of cigarette smoke, vodka and tea are invariably served by elderly Polish women who always seem to hover in the background, yet whose constant proffering of hospitality results ultimately obtrusive and irritating. Except for these elderly waitresses, the meetings tend to be dominated by men. When Judith is finally introduced to a group of Polish dissidents, she notes that all eight are men and when she inquires whether there are any female dissidents, her question is met with a vague reply, which discourages her from making any further inquiries into the subject of gender and dissent.

2 Oates's story at once conforms to and challenges the gendered representation of Eastern Europe,[1] and particularly Eastern European politics, as typified by a male figure that frequently oscillates between the opposite poles of dissidence and conformism. On the one hand, in portraying the almost exclusively male-dominated meetings, "My Warszawa: 1980" corroborates the masculinized vision of Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it challenges it by introducing a character who is attuned to the gender gap and whose own identity as a woman and a Jew comes under scrutiny as a result of her confrontation with the world behind the Iron Curtain. In doing so, Oates's story draws the reader's attention away from men, whether oppositionists or apparatchiks, and towards women, who are often either absent from or underrepresented in the

American works which imagine, describe, and teach Eastern Europe to the American readership.

3 Accordingly, in this essay I propose to explore the gendered geographies of the European East in the works written by those writers who turned their first-hand impressions of the Eastern Bloc countries into literature, thus contributing to shaping the image of this geopolitical construct and a mental rubric in the American imaginary: John Updike, Joyce Carol Oates, Philip Roth, Patricia Hampl, and Eva Hoffman. The gender (im)balance portrayed in their texts uncovers, at times challenging, the fantasies, fears, and concerns driving the East-West encounters which these texts dramatize, while at the same time providing interesting insights into the socio-political construction of gender on each side of the Iron Curtain.

1.1. Gendered Geographies: Privileging Male Stories in the Western Representations of Eastern Europe

4 In *How We Found America*: *Reading Gender through East European Immigrant Narratives* (1995), Magdalena J. Zaborowska distinguishes between two types of Eastern European immigrants to the US in the post-war period: the "'huddled masses'" (19) coming to America in search of better lives, and political dissidents fleeing the communist regime, whose respective presence in America provided two narrative traditions, further divided along gender lines. Whereas the "huddled masses" tradition features stories of both female and male acculturation, immigrant struggle, and miscegenation (in the case of women immigrants), the latter narrative pattern is distinctly masculinized. In Zaborowska's words, "[i]n this tradition, women hardly ever emerge as political activists and celebrated émigré dissidents" (19).

5 Indeed, the image of Eastern Europe in the American literature during the Cold War was shaped by male intellectuals and writers from the region, whose works were celebrated in the US not only for their artistic merits but also for their political import. Thus, in *The Captive Mind* (1953) Polish émigré writer Czesław Miłosz elucidated for the West the deceptive allure of communist ideology and the process of intellectual enslavement by the system in the post-war era, whereas in "The Tragedy of Central Europe" (1984) Czech novelist Milan Kundera strove to awaken the Western consciousness to the Soviet Union's enforced colonization of the countries which, like his native Czechoslovakia, had always been part of Europe but were now relegated to the artificial political construct of Eastern Europe. Polish marriage of the working class and intelligentsia, embodied by the frontmen of the Solidarity movement, Lech Wałęsa and Adam Michnik, captivated the Western imagination, whereas Vaclav Havel's conception of a civil society based on strong ethical values, non-violence and the principle of "living in truth" resonated with the country that produced Henry David Thoreau.

6 It was particularly the uneasy entanglement between politics and culture which people like Havel incarnated that fascinated Western intellectuals, prompting them to assist Eastern European and Soviet dissidents in a number of ways. American authors expressed their solidarity with proscribed writers through open letters, support meetings and conferences, written pieces, fund raising, as well as reviews of Soviet and Eastern European literature. Banned works from behind the Iron Curtain were read with care and respect – unlike the officially published literature, they were thought to

show life as it really was and not as it ought to be according to the dogma of social realism. One prominent Western intellectual even went as far as to single out Eastern Europe as "a reservoir of talent, of unquestioning adherence to the risks and functions of art and original thought," wryly contrasting the unofficial channels of artistic creativity flowing beyond the façade of the state-sanctioned propaganda with America's liberal-arts institutions: the "'creative writing centers,' the 'poetry workshops,' the 'humanities research institutes,' [and] the foundation-financed hives for deep thinkers" (Steiner 299-300).

7 Western writers also helped to popularize dissident literature beyond the Iron Curtain through supporting the phenomenon of *tamizdat*, which consisted in smuggling banned works and publishing them abroad. One of the authors analyzed in this essay, Philip Roth, engaged in a symbolic "tamizdat mission" of (re)introducing the American audience to the works of some of the best Eastern European authors. Fascinated with Prague's literary culture, Roth befriended Czech dissidents whom he then helped financially, enlisting other American authors, including John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates, for the cause. In addition to his own Prague-inspired prose, the most tangible outcome of Roth's personal engagement with Eastern Europe was a book series *Writers from the Other Europe*, which he edited for Penguin. The series included both reprints and original translations of the works by writers from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, among others. Interestingly, whereas the prefaces to the books published in the series are authored by both women and men, e.g., Elizabeth Pochoda, Joanna Rostropowicz Clark, John Updike, or Irving Howe, the authors of all seventeen titles included in the collection are men.

8 According to Zaborowska, "[b]y presenting the 'Other Europe' as written exclusively by men, Roth establishes a one-gender cultural model for audiences in the United States and Western Europe" (18). In this sense, the epithet "other," as in the "Other Europe," connotes not only the area's position within the Western imaginary—betwixt and between the opposite poles of uniqueness and marginality—but it "can [also] be seen as signifying absent female authors within the canon of male novelists established by the series" (Zaborowska 18-19), thus reinforcing the perennial otherness of women, and the double marginalization of women authors within traditionally male-dominated literary canons. The questions that arises is why Roth failed to include any women authors if, at the same time, he trusted several female intellectuals with providing critical analyses of the works in question. Whereas it might be tempting to interpret Roth's shortsightedness in light of the criticism that he received for his portrayal of women in his works,[2] it seems more productive to see this exclusion of women authors from the Penguin book series as symptomatic of a broader pattern of privileging male voices as representative of the Eastern European entanglement of politics and culture, especially in its dissident incarnation. In this sense, Roth's editorial choice in *The Writers from the Other Europe* series—his decision to foreground male authors—might have indeed further reinforced the masculinized image of Eastern Europe and its literary cultures in the Western imaginary. However, to read such privileging solely in terms of the West's othering of the East would be to overlook the other side of the equation: a complex gender dynamics in Eastern Europe under communism, where women were at once encouraged to take on social roles, while at the same time struggling against patriarchal bulwarks.[3]

9 The schematic gendered representation of Eastern Europe in the American Cold-War imaginary seems to be correlated with a rather simplistic understanding of the term "dissident" itself. According to Jonathan Bolton this notion "is constructed from just a few basic planks—courage, truthfulness, steadfast self-confidence" that "speak to Western dreams and desires—a belief in heroes, a yearning for a clear stand against evil, a hope for more fulfilling forms of political participation" (2-3), but does not necessarily reflect the convoluted reality of political opposition behind the Iron Curtain.

10 That being said, the privileging of male dissidence was not exclusive to the West. In her thought-provoking chapter on masculinity and dissidence in Eastern Europe, Anna Muller centers on prison as a site where a dissident man's manliness was enacted, tried, and strengthened. Focusing on the case of Poland in the 1980s, Muller argues that political dissidence in this period represented yet another incarnation of "the dominant model of a Polish fighter" as "an underground insurgent or soldier," which, historically, produced "a national struggle that was normatively based on homosocial ties among men… despite the mass participation of women in every phase" (189). In other words, political opposition was perceived as the domain of men even though it involved both men and women.

11 Take the prison correspondence that Muller uses as a primary source of insight into the construction of dissident masculinities. If it had not been for the wives and partners of dissidents to whom such correspondence was addressed, dissidents' letters, which often contained key political messages and reflections, would have been neither shared nor distributed. In addition to acting as "liaisons between the private and the public" (Muller 190), Eastern European women were actively engaged in all sorts of dissident activities, including but not limited to producing samizdat writing, working in underground and émigré publishing, organizing political conspiracy, and creating support and information networks. In Poland, women constituted fifty percent of Solidarity's overall membership, albeit their representation in Solidarity's hierarchy was much smaller, and it was an exclusively female team, known as Ladies' Operations Unit, that ran the editorial team of Solidarity's underground newspaper *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, "shap[ing] illegal publishing into an instrument of civic activism" (Penn 9-10).

12 Moreover, many women collaborated with their men. Bolton points out that contrary to the popular view of dissent as a lonely, highly individualistic activity, dissent in former Czechoslovakia was frequently enacted in "spousal units," where one person adopted a more "public" role, whereas the other, usually the woman, took care of the family and supported it financially (42). Such individuals carried a *triple burden* of being a woman under a communist system: in addition to working professionally, they had to take care of the house and the children (double burden) while being politically active.

13 Although women's emancipation and their equality with men was an integral part of Marxism-Leninism and thus the political program of the "actually existing socialism," "[w]omen did not figure here as the subjects of their liberation but rather as mere objects of an already set ideology of liberation" (Vagnerová 23). Despite professing equality of sexes, communism was a system whose support for "women's emancipation was often more strategic than genuine," as the essentialist understanding of gender continued to determine men and women's roles in public and private spaces: women occupied lower-level and lower-paid jobs, were underrepresented in high-level politics

and administration, and carried the burden of domestic labor (Massino and Penn 2). While the latter element may not be a direct consequence of the system, Jill Massino and Shana Penn observe that, in some cases, the system actually "reinforced the already existing traditions and patriarchal tendencies" in Eastern Europe (4).

14 The already existing gender dynamics undoubtedly played a role in the process of foregrounding male dissident voices and shaping the image of Eastern European opposition movements as dominated by men, thus rendering dissident heroines largely invisible. Solidarity activist and politician Barbara Labuda admits that she wrote speeches for her male colleagues and gave interviews to Western reporters but not in her name: remaining anonymous was a way of protecting one's identity and thus avoiding potential persecution, among others (Penn 13). From a broader cultural perspective, such instances of anonymous female courage and resistance fell in line with the long-standing ethos of a Polish woman as a silent yet unflinching preserver of Polish patriotic values and religious faith. Following the romantic tradition of female backstage activism and grass-root work, the women of Solidarity did not seek recognition for their actions and "perpetuated the myth of working-class men as the superstars of resistance" for the sake of the Western media (Penn 13).

15 Nor did the male activists seek recognition for their female colleagues. In the grand scheme of things, the question of one's gender seemed to be of little concern. What mattered was the action that had to be performed, and it was of secondary importance who performed it. Thus, following the already existing social traditions and gender dynamics, the prevalent image of the political opposition as male-dominated was not questioned, even if a significant portion of that opposition remained consistently overlooked.

16 Ironically enough, the opposition shared this culture of masculinity with the state, since "[e]arly Communism had been enchanted with masculine physical strength and the virility of the male worker, while late socialism was best defined as paternalistic" (Muller 190). Similarly, masculinity came to be intertwined with dissidence in Eastern Europe, as it was male oppositionists who came to be perceived as bearing the highest burden of dissent: political trials and imprisonment, regardless of the fact that political persecution and its consequences affected individuals and their families in varied ways and independently of their gender. In turn, the spectacular image of an imprisoned male dissident, ideally a gifted writer, fueled the Western intellectual imagination, especially since "[f]or Western observers, a central dissident genre has always been 'letters from prison,' imbued with both courageous idealism and hard-minded realism" (Bolton 42). Valuable as it is, this dissident genre reinforced the masculine model of dissidence at the expense of other testimonies of and reflections on political engagement. In fact, certain dissident accounts that did not conform to the mold failed to attract the Western attention, as was the case with the Czech author Eva Kantůrková's fictionalized memoir of her prison days (Bolton 42). That being said, sometimes it was the original culture that gave precedence to the male dissident voice over its female counterpart: in the book version of the conversations between a couple of dissident Czech authors, Dominik Tatarka and Eva Štolbová, the latter's side was omitted and the conversation was turned into Tatarka's monologue (Sabatos 82).

17 Therefore, it follows that to see the dominant masculinized image of Eastern Europe in the Western imaginary in terms of mere Orientalism might be to overlook a number of social tendencies and traditions, as well as gender dynamics, on both sides of the Iron

Curtain, that this image may reveal. Indeed, when speaking about Solidarity, Shana Penn identifies both the dissidents and the Western press as responsible for promoting "the image of a male revolution, thus institutionalizing, at the very moment when democracy was born, women's invisibility in the Solidarity movement" (3) which the very women oppositionists did not seek to redress. In other words, inasmuch as the mythicizing of male dissidence may be perceived as part of a broader pattern of othering Eastern Europe by the West, it also reflects factual gender bias and marginalization of women's involvement in politics and culture in the region.

18 In what follows, I will explore the literary images of the European East in the works of John Updike, Philip Roth, Joyce Carol Oates, Patricia Hampl, and Eva Hoffman, bearing in mind the complex gender dynamics discussed above and paying particular attention to the (under)representation of female characters against the male ones.

19 In my earlier work on American representations of Eastern Europe during and shortly after communism, I have found the adjective "liminal" to be an eloquent shortcut for expressing the in-between and ambiguous space which this geopolitical and mental category occupied in the American imaginary. Eastern Europe has been traditionally portrayed as hovering between civilization and barbarism, which, depending on the historical era, stood for Europe and Asia, or Western Europe and Russia, respectively. In addition to the inherent quality of ambiguity, Eastern Europe's liminality manifested in the way the area was apprehended by those Westerners who dared to pay it a visit. Thus, travelling to Eastern Europe was often equivalent to entering a separate spatial and temporal dimension where history had tangible weight and texture to it, and where, in a truly liminal fashion, one was exempt from everyday rules and regulations. In other words, by visiting Eastern Europe, American characters entered a realm where extraordinary things happened, and where they often underwent some kind of transformation, including an existential or identity crisis, or a creative breakthrough.

20 Interestingly, the epithet "liminal," has also been used by scholars Valentina Glajar and Domnica Radulescu to conceptualize the image of Eastern European women in the Western imaginary: "They represent the ultimate expression of liminality, as they are not drastically Other and thus are endowed with an aura of familiarity, or of Europeanness, and yet they are not fully familiar, or European, either, as they come from the most remote regions of Europe, perceived as almost Oriental, as almost exotic, yet not fully so" ("Introduction" 3). In terms of cultural representations, this has given rise to highly essentialized images of Eastern European females which, according to Glajar and Radulescu, could be categorized into three major types: vampirettes, amazons, and wretches. Inasmuch as the Eastern European woman has been variously essentialized in the Western literature as manly, seductively dangerous, but also wretched and silenced (Radulescu 35), the whole of Eastern Europe has also been apprehended as a semi-Oriental woman whose meekness, passivity, and old-fashioned ways contrast sharply "with the masculine traits such as strong, rational, and active" (Holden 188). This pattern of othering—where Eastern Europe is feminized and sexualized—is present not only in the cultural representations of Eastern Europe under communism, and even more so right after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Bryla, "Postdependent Eastern Europe"), but it can also be found in the American Cold-War political discourse where homosexualization and feminization of communism was used to discredit the regime (Armengol-Carrera 119).

2. West Meets East: Romantic Attraction and Erotic Tensions in the Short Fiction by Updike, Oates, and Roth

21 In the fiction by Updike, Oates, and Roth elements of the above-mentioned pattern of othering coexist with more nuanced representations of Eastern Europe and its peoples, even if these representations ultimately tend to focus more on male characters, thus contributing to the masculinized image of Eastern Europe in the Cold-War American imaginary. That being said, the author's gender seems to be a mitigating factor. Thus, Joyce Carol Oates's short stories reflect the writer's preoccupation with gender dynamics to a larger extent than the works by Roth and, especially, Updike: not only does Oates make her character Judith Horne, evoked at the beginning of this essay, notice the absence of women among Warsaw's proscribed writers, but she also inserts other female characters into an otherwise masculinized milieu of the Cold-War cultural diplomacy. Similarly, Patricia Hampl and Eva Hoffman's autobiographical works are attuned to the voices and stories of Eastern European women. Although neither of these authors attempts to redress the gender imbalance in representing Eastern Europe in the Western imaginary, or at least no such declaration is issued, one gets an impression that both Hampl and Hoffman use their chosen genre—a memoir and a narrative of return interwoven with a prescient social observation, respectively—to provide as nuanced and multifaceted a view as possible.

22 From a chronological perspective, it is John Updike's satirical short stories from the Henry Bech cycle that offer interesting insights into the relatively early stages of the American Cold-War cultural diplomacy and the West-East relations. Inspired by Updike's own 1964 stint as an American cultural ambassador behind the Iron Curtain, the stories feature Henry Bech, a blocked Jewish-American author, whom Updike had created explicitly to channel his impressions of the Eastern Bloc. Shaped as witty vignettes rather than comprehensive accounts of Bech's tour around the European East, the stories recount Bech's forays into the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria, and, some twenty years later, Czechoslovakia. In most of these stories, the European East is represented almost exclusively through male characters, most of whom are either writers, predominantly the official ones, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, various apparatchiks, and members of the US diplomatic services. Women, if they appear at all, tend to play secondary roles, acting as accessories rather than fully fledged characters. There are however two notable exceptions that disrupt this otherwise all-male imaginative geography of the European East: Kate, Bech's Russian translator in "Rich in Russia," and Vera Glavanakova, a Bulgarian poetess from the eponymous story. Although these characters could not be different—Kate is a dejected figure described unflatteringly as skinny and flat-chested, whereas Vera is feminine, radiant, and lyrical —their presence ultimately serves to highlight the incommensurateness of the West and the East at this point in history.

23 Kate's real name is Ekaterina and she has been appointed to be Bech's translator during his stay in Moscow. And translates for Bech she does, spending "endless paper-coloured hours" by Bech's side, which only add to "her neutrality and transparency" that Bech, a bachelor, associates with what being married must be like (Updike, "Rich" 14). Bech's dismissive and rather sexist attitude towards Kate is an extension of his attitude to the Soviet Union itself. In "Rich in Russia," Western cultural diplomacy resembles a series

of schematic dance moves which Bech goes through with practiced weariness and a hefty dose of prejudice. Even his blunders seem to be staged, as Bech in Russia develops "a clowning super-American manner" to which Kate responds with "schoolteacherish patience, with ageless peasant roots" (Updike, "Rich" 14). At one point, Bech decides to spend his Russian royalties on consumer goods, which leads to a rather miserable shopping trip that only serves to reveal the dysfunctionality of the communist system and to make Kate embarrassed on behalf of her country. Although Bech is momentarily sorry for his gentle translator, he only makes things worse by praising social realism artwork that Kate despises, thus reinforcing the East-West divide in which Kate and himself are locked.

24 Ultimately, Bech fails to discern between the stereotype and the person. It is only towards the end of his stay that he realizes that Kate might have been romantically interested in him, but even then he chooses to attribute her final kiss, "colourless but moist and good, like a boiled potato" (Updike, "Rich" 23) to the Soviet hospitality that *provided* Kate for Bech to sleep with. In addition to mocking the very idea of the Cold-War cultural diplomacy, which in the story thrives on stereotype and complacency, Bech's sexist logic, redolent of the 1950s' gender bias and cultural essentialism, reduces Kate to a "type," whose sensitivity comes off as wretchedness and whose professional skills and intelligence are overlooked at the expense of her more "useful" assets as a woman.

25 A more promising representation emerges from "The Bulgarian Poetess," inspired by Updike's visit to Bulgaria.[4] Set in the capital city of Sofia, the story transpires against the backdrop of the usual business of cultural diplomacy: long, tedious meetings with exclusively male members of the Writers' Union at which Bech is asked the same questions he had already answered in "Moscow and Kiev, Yerevan and Alma-Ata, Bucharest and Prague" (Updike, "The Bulgarian" 47) and where "international understanding" is invariably evoked but never quite achieved. This time, however, the stale dynamics is disrupted by an unexpected appearance of a popular Bulgarian poet, Vera Glavanakova. If Kate is weighed down not only by her present circumstances but also the burden of Russian history, Vera is associated with lightness and radiance that might be rare in America and seem utterly unexpected "in this remote and abused nation" of Bulgaria (Updike, "The Bulgarian" 51). What is more, in addition to defying the stereotype of an Eastern European woman with her literary achievement, her poise, and "her Parisian clothes," the Bulgarian poetess challenges Bech's preconception about women in general, for as "an intense conjunction of good looks and brains" she comes across as a rare bird; a beautiful anomaly (Updike, "The Bulgarian" 54).

26 Ultimately, however, Bech and Vera are not meant to be. Despite a mutual attraction, the East-West alliance, romantic or otherwise, comes to an end without having had a chance to flourish. Not unlike Kate, who is locked into "a colourless other dimension" (Updike, "The Bulgarian" 15) which Bech has neither interest nor willingness to penetrate, Vera belongs to a world beyond "a dingy flecked mirror," where "everything was similar but left-handed" (45-46). Divided by the Iron Curtain of political difference and mutual national stereotype, the Western world and its distorted Eastern imitation remain incompatible, rendering Bech and Vera's relationship impossible.

27 Just like in "Rich in Russia," Bech's Cold-War Orientalism of the Eastern other goes hand in hand with his pattern of othering women. In this sense, inasmuch as the Bech stories provide insight into the political power relations in the bipolar world,[5] as seen

from the perspective of the US cultural diplomacy, they also reflect the contemporary US gender dynamics with a decisively 1950s-tinge. Read from today's perspective, Bechiana retains its scintillating sarcasm, which, granted, is often directed as much at Bech as it is at his others, but it also comes off as sexist—a quality which has not aged well.

28 Yet, stereotyping and othering are hardly the domain of men in the Western literary representations of the European East. Joyce Carol Oates's short stories are an interesting exception to the pattern of rendering the East-West cultural diplomacy as exclusively male. After all, in April 1978 Oates, alongside John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, and John Steinbeck, participated in the Soviet-American Writers' Conference organized by the Charles Kettering Foundation, whereas in 1980 the writer, together with Susan Sontag and John Ashbery visited Eastern Europe under the auspices of the US State Department. Oates's experiences prompted her to write several short stories published individually between 1981 and 1983 and then collected in *Last Days*: *Stories* from 1985.

29 As an author who has been interested in gender dynamics in the American society since the beginning of her literary career, Oates is keenly attuned to the gender imbalance in the East-West encounters. Thus, in "Détente," a short story inspired by the Soviet-American Writers' conference Oates had attended, the American delegation includes only one female novelist and essayist, Antonia Haas. Already at the beginning of the conference, Antonia's presence proves be a source of confusion to the Soviet delegates who have expected Haas to be a man. However, the gender and cultural essentialism which underlies the discomfiture turns out to cut both ways. By confronting Antonia with the Soviet delegates, Oates zooms in on the Western intellectual preconceptions about the entanglement between art, gender, and politics.

30 In *The Journal of Joyce Carol Oates: 1973-1982* (2007), Oates commiserates with Andrei Sinyavsky, a renowned Russian dissident writer who in 1965 had been sentenced to several years of "corrective" labor for writing allegedly anti-Soviet fiction—a verdict which met with vehement protest from many American intellectuals. However, in view of the imminent meeting with the Soviet delegation, Oates ponders the possibility of official writers living a double life of maintaining a political façade—an outward front conveniently in line with the dogma—while harboring a secret self (*The Journal* 243).

31 Oates's reflections feed into the character of Antonia and her attitude towards the Soviet delegates; especially the most mysterious of them, Vassily Zurov. Despite his impressive credentials—he is said to hold several Soviet accolades for his literary achievements—rumor has it that at some point in his career Zurov got into trouble with the communist authorities. Although his presence among the delegates precludes active dissidence, suggesting instead that if Zurov had indeed strayed at some point, he must have recanted, Antonia prefers to romanticize him as a tormented idealist endowed with a secret self at odds with the propaganda drivel. This impression is reinforced not only by Zurov's pale, intense countenance, which reminds Antonia of "a divinity student out of a Russian novel; one of the demons from Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*," but also his mother tongue: "a barrage of sounds, utterly alien; a virtual windstorm; poetry in motion" (Oates, "Détente" 115).

32 Since Antonia and Vassily lack a common language, she constructs her image of the Russian by supplementing what little visual and auditory information is available to her with a generous dose of clichés. Out of the large cultural storehouse of American stereotypes of Russia, Antonia picks those elements that conform to "an idealized

picture of the Russian intelligentsia as a self-sacrificing, cultured, and sensitive cohort of exceptional individuals" (Chatterjee and Holmgren, Introduction 3), imagining Vassily as a dissident-at-heart who "had been harshly punished, frightened, coerced into adopting at least the outward gestures of non-rebellion" (Oates, "Détente" 128). Antonia's infatuation with the idea of Vassily, or rather a romanticized notion of a dissident, which, according to Bolton, satisfies the Western yearning for a hero, leads her to envisage an affinity with the Russian that goes beyond the national and linguistic difference. In turn, Vassily feels emboldened enough by Antonia's interest to pay a visit to her hotel room. An impassioned if brief encounter that ensues (the telephone sounds ominously when Vassily is about to kiss her) sends Antonia into a frenzy of daydreaming: momentarily, she imagines eloping with her "Communist lover" (Oates, "Détente" 131) and starting anew in Moscow.[6]

33 However, in the light of the day, the Russian-American romance seems less enticing. Vassily's gestures result too expansive, his manner jarring. But the final straw is Vassily's passivity in the face of the diatribe delivered by the delegation's chairman against the American support and admiration for dissident writers, Solzhenitsyn, Brodsky, Sinyavsky, whom the chairman deems "the enemies of the state" (Oates, "Détente" 134). Antonia is so fixated on her idealized version of Vassily as a rebel in disguise that when he fails to stand up to his superior, she is disappointed and turns away from him. Vassily's failure to live up to Antonia's expectations of him as a "divinity student revolutionary" (Oates, "Détente" 131) nips the incipient romance in the bud. As in Henry Bech's stories, the East and the West remain locked in two separate dimensions which no amount of cultural diplomacy can remedy. However, unlike Bech, whose failure to connect with Kate or envision a relationship with Vera derives from his inability to look beyond the perceived East-West dichotomy, Antonia falls victim to her own romanticized vision of the figure of a male dissident which the flesh-and-bone, and thus imperfect, Vassily cannot live up to.

34 The subject of preconception and expectation in the East-West relations, whether cultural or amorous, drives also Philip Roth's 1985 novella, *The Prague Orgy*. Although much has been said about the novella in light of Roth's engagement with the Other Europe,[7] considerably less attention has been devoted to the gender dynamics among the work's flamboyant characters. The novella shares the motif of an East-West cultural encounter with Updike's and Oates's short stories. However, unlike Henry Bech, Judith Horne, and Antonia Haas, the protagonist of Roth's novella, American-Jewish writer Nathan Zuckerman, is not bound by diplomatic conventions, for he ventures behind the Iron Curtain privately, to retrieve the unpublished short stories of a Jewish author murdered by the Nazis. The whole enterprise, which takes but two intense days, is masterminded by the murdered author's son, one Zdenek Sisovsky, a banned Czech author in exile in America who, unable to return to Prague to retrieve the manuscripts himself, convinces his American counterpart to carry out the mission for him.

35 Sisovsky, whom some critics have likened to Milan Kundera, is a quintessential Eastern European émigré whose dramatic Eastern European story features cultural oppression and political exile—the standard elements of an idealized dissident trajectory—with an added burden of his father's tragic demise. Although Sisovsky's story proves intriguing enough to tap into Zuckerman's "tamizdat mentality"—the Western image of Eastern Europe as oppressed and desolate (Benatov)—and activate his savior instinct, Roth is careful not to let his readers follow suit by introducing two women characters that not

only problematize Sisovsky's narrative, but, ultimately, pour "a little cold water on [Zuckerman's] free-world fantasies of virtuous political suffering" (Roth 26).

36 The first of these characters is Eva Kalinova, a seemingly minor figure,[8] who accompanies Sisovsky on his visit to Zuckerman. At first sight, Kalinova conforms to one of the three major female stereotypes identified by Glajar and Radulescu: the Eastern European wretch. Under Zuckerman's eyes, Eva is "[a] woman of about forty, [with] pale eyes, broad cheekbones, dark, severely parted hair—a distraught, arresting face... Her fragrance is strong, her stockings laddered, her nerves shot" (Roth 3-4). Eva is Sisovsky's lover and Prague's most famous Chekhovian actress who has been forced by the regime to give up acting. Eva has been punished for having left her husband, "a Czechoslovak Artist of Merit" for a man who happened to be a Jew and thus "a Zionist agent and a bourgeois enemy of the people" (Roth 13). Humiliated and banned from the stage, Eva decided to leave Prague with Sisovsky, who himself had been proscribed for writing a political satire that enraged the communist authorities.

37 In New York, Eva has become part of the "huddled masses" of Eastern European migrants that Zaborowska writes about—deprived of her status as a theatrical star and alienated from her homeland, she takes up a job of a shop assistant selling women's dresses. Although Eva's story is tragic in its own way, she believes that it falls short of the expected Eastern European narrative of punishment and sacrifice: "All these people, they suffer for their ideas and for their banned books, and for democracy to return to Czechoslovakia—they suffer for principles, for their humanity, for their hatred of the Russians, and in this terrible story I am still suffering for love!" (Roth 13). Contrary to Sisovsky, who does not shy away from exploiting his own story for the sake of the West, Eva not only refuses to be defined by what happened to her, but also resists Sisovsky's urge to tell her story for others to hear. Although she is no dissident, there is a sense of dignity and agency to Eva's refusal to cater to the Western tamizdat mentality; to be "an ironical Czech character in an ironical Czech story" (Roth 12). As limited as her current options are, she hopes to start anew in the US—a project which Sisovsky seems keen to frustrate by constantly revisiting their pre-emigration life.

38 Eva's story is linked to that of Olga, the other female character of Roth's novella. Olga is a Prague novelist, Sisovsky's ex-wife, and the guardian of his father's manuscripts, which she refuses to hand back as punishment for Sisovsky's numerous infidelities. Zuckerman's mission in Prague is thus to gain Olga's trust, seduce her and then convince her to let him smuggle the precious stories out of Czechoslovakia. Olga forms part of a rather colorful and extravagant troupe of proscribed Czech intellectuals whom Zuckerman first meets at the eponymous orgy—a lascivious gathering where sex and politics are closely intertwined.[9] Olga's presence challenges stereotypes in more than one way: not only is she the only female novelist at the orgy, but she also puts Zuckerman's idea of Eastern European "virtuous political suffering" to the test, for she is neither suffering not virtuous.

39 To the contrary, Olga is a flamboyant, exuberant and irrepressibly sexual human being whose unashamed advances towards Zuckerman almost make the otherwise liberated novelist blush.[10] Eva might be the actress of the story, yet it is Olga who puts on a much bigger show for the sake of Zuckerman, as she tries to seduce him, make him marry her and take her to America. When Zuckerman fails to respond, she mockingly accuses him of hypocrisy: "You are afraid to fuck me. Why is that? Why do you write this book about

fucking that makes you so famous if you are afraid to fuck somebody? You hate fucking everybody or just me?" (Roth 31).

40 Olga's up-front manner and racy language disconcert Zuckerman because they do not sit easily with the stereotype of a silenced, oppressed author that he had imagined her and her fellow Czech literati to be. Nor is she what he would expect from a woman, especially one that *he* was meant to seduce. In fact, Olga's unrepressed behavior and her sexually-explicit repartee force him to revisit not just his tamizdat mentality, but also his own public self: "I am not fucking everyone, or indeed anyone, but sit quietly on the sofa being polite. I am dignified, well-behaved, reliable spectator, secure, urbane, calm, polite, the quiet respectable one who does not take his trousers off, and *these* are the menacing writers" (Roth 36). Indeed, it is Olga and the other proscribed Czechoslovak artists, especially the ribald storyteller Bolotka, that, paradoxically, seem more liberated than Zuckerman, the emissary of the free world.

41 However, it is Eastern Europe after all, and in Roth's novella Olga's openly sexual self and her habit of changing sexual partners turn out to be less of a declaration of female power than a form of resistance against "powers-that-be" (Roth 64): Soviet "normalization" and the ensuing social and cultural repressions, but also Olga's personal issues, including her loneliness and her indignation over Sisovsky's betrayal. Indeed, as the story progresses, Olga's behavior turns more erratic and desperate, thus compromising the initial impression of self-confident flamboyancy and flair. Olga's indignation reaches its peak when she learns about the true purpose of Zuckerman's visit to Prague and his association with Sisovsky, "that monster," and Eva, "the aging ingénue" (Roth 57). Rejected and humiliated by Zuckerman, Olga is nevertheless the one who calls the tune, ushering, knowingly or not, the tragicomic finale of Zuckerman's Prague adventure. In the ultimate bout of self-dignity, she hands Zuckerman the coveted manuscripts which are almost immediately confiscated by the secret police that have either been spying on the couple all along or have been notified by Olga herself. Olga also enlightens the American novelist as to the true nature of Sisovsky, who, apparently, fabricated his father's story to have Zuckerman smuggle the manuscripts out of Czechoslovakia and then have them published under his own name.

42 In creating the characters of Eva and Olga, Roth at once subscribes to the stereotyped vision of Eastern European women as wretched victims of history and challenges the very tamizdat mentality responsible for perpetuating such a cliché. Despondent, tragic, and sexualized as they are, they nevertheless strive to retain their dignity and live their lives on their own terms as much as possible, refusing to have their stories narrated and manipulated by men for the benefit of other men.

2.1. Taking a Broader Vista: Eastern Europe in Patricia Hampl's and Eva Hoffman's Non-Fiction

43 In the introduction to this essay, I have suggested that the gender dynamics portrayed in the American representations of Eastern Europe feeds on the archetypal image of male dissident, promoted in the Western press and literature and fostered by the opposition movements and the dissident writers themselves, but also the communist system and the internal patriarchal traditions which that system sometimes reinforced, despite proclaiming equality for men and women. As Agnieszka Graff points out, the development of and the struggle around "the woman question" in Eastern Europe

defies the wave chronology used in the West, and has to be analyzed instead in light of national histories and mythologies. Simultaneously, it must be remembered that "each Eastern European country realized socialist doctrines and Marxist-Leninist ideology differently. There were many socialisms and many different perceptions and lived experiences," which in turn influenced the routes towards women's rights in the region (Jusová 18-19).

44 Rather unsurprisingly, the woman question does not feature prominently in the Western literary representations of Eastern European locales and peoples discussed so far. If the absence or underrepresentation of women in the Eastern European political circles, whether official or opposition, is noted at all, it is usually an American female character who does it, as is the case in Joyce Carol Oates's short stories. Most of the time, the question of women's condition under communism is overshadowed by what is perceived as more pressing and relevant concerns. The non-fiction works by Patricia Hampl and Eva Hoffman alter this pattern, as they strive to give visibility to Eastern European females and their stories, including the experience of being a woman behind the Iron Curtain. Hampl's and Hoffman's interest in the Eastern European woman stems from their own investment in the feminist debate and the movement's ongoing topicality at the time when each of them visited Eastern Europe. Concurrently, the very choice of the literary genre plays a role here, as Hampl's and Hoffman's preferred literary forms naturally allow for a more sprawling scope and a greater breadth of contemplation than the short fiction by Updike, Oates, and Roth. Particularly in the case of Hoffman, the form of the text—a narrative of return which morphs into a sociological commentary—lends itself to the author's project of reporting, analyzing, and empathizing with the Eastern European realities and its people. As for Hampl, even as her memoir mythicizes Prague for the Western reader, the author nevertheless strives to capture the paradoxes of Czech life under communism while being well aware of the fragmented nature of the resulting account.

45 Cultural representations of the other often tell us as much, if not more, about the self. Both Hampl's and Hoffman's journeys to Eastern Europe were driven by significant personal motivation. Hampl's interest in Prague, which is the focus and locus of her memoir, *A Romantic Education* (1981), was first sparked by her grandmother, a Czech immigrant to the US, who features prominently in the first part of Hampl's work. As for Hoffman, although she had migrated from Poland to the US at the age of thirteen, she retained a keen interest in her homeland and the rest of Eastern Europe. Before publishing *Exit into History*: *A Journey Through a New Eastern Europe* (1993), Hoffman had already been well known for *Lost in Translation* (1989), a beautifully nuanced account of her migrant experience and coming into her own at the intersections of two countries and languages.

46 In Hampl's *A Romantic Education,* a young female poet tries to come to terms with personal dilemmas that feed on larger socio-political issues of the time. Thus, the journey behind the Iron Curtain becomes for her a journey to understand the place her grandmother originates from in its historical and political complexity, but also an occasion to revisit her understanding of her own country, the US, and her place in the world. In this sense, *A Romantic Education* is not a didactic affair, for inasmuch as it strives to explain Prague to the Western reader, it is always most attentive to Prague's *poetics of space*, which reveals itself in detail. As in a poem, details conceal meanings which reflect the author's concerns and sensibilities. Thus, Hampl brings to Prague her

ongoing preoccupation with the question of beauty, which she extrapolates onto her identity as a woman, a poet, and an American.

47 Prague's "broken beauty" residing in the details of architecture, the city's palimpsestic history, and muddled politics "lift[s] [Hampl] out of the self-absorbed female preoccupation" with beauty as perfection and regularity (Hampl 174), while at the same time forcing her to revisit other givens, such as her own political allegiances and beliefs. The eponymous "romantic education" thus becomes an education in political consciousness; the experience of Prague problematizes the notions of center and periphery for Hampl, providing her with the distance necessary to comprehend her own country and adding nuance to her understanding of global politics and political systems.

48 No wonder then that the Vietnam War and the feminist movement figure prominently in Hampl's memoir, as both have shaped the author's political consciousness. One of the insights that the experience of Prague provides is that neither of these issues seem central to the Eastern Europeans she meets. She is disconcerted when a famous Czech dissident poet professes his admiration for the American "energy" while failing to note how that energy has been "misdirected" in Vietnam (Hampl 203). Similarly, women and minority rights seem of little immediate importance to the women Hampl meets in Prague. When asked about such issues as family planning or the situation of homosexual individuals in Czechoslovakia, one of Hampl's women friends says that "they didn't have time for such things," and that "they worked too hard" to think of sex in terms of politics (Hampl 288). Another friend of Hampl's, a young translator named Anna, identifies Czech women's movement exclusively with the Socialist program, thus dismissing its relevance for women (Hampl 287).

49 Scholarly analyses corroborate Hampl's account of feminism's bad press in Czechoslovakia, linking it to the population's broader "disenchantment with social discourse" (Hron 84). As an ideology based on sameness, communism equalized human experience by neutralizing gender identity for the sake of maintaining the pretense of collectivism and egalitarianism. In this sense, the discourse of women's emancipation professed by the system was meant at little more than "equality in the working process" (Ambros 232). As suggested earlier in this essay, gendered experience was neutralized also in the dissident discourse "in which gender was subsumed in general, existential, humanist problems" for the sake of promoting universal human rights (Hron 85).

50 Thus, the Czech women's dismissal of the significance of women's issues seems to stem from their disillusionment with the workings of the system, on the one hand, and their conviction that neither their identity nor experience are valid enough to compete with the political problems of the time, on the other. At the same time, it is evident that the women portrayed by Hampl suffer the consequences of the system's inadequate socio-economic policies in addition to the double burden of professional and domestic work. Importantly, Hampl does not patronize her Prague counterparts for failing to perceive their gender in political terms—the strength of the memoir lies in the author's willingness to look beyond national and cultural difference while being keenly aware of the mitigating influence of individual situatedness on how one's reality is apprehended.

51 A similar insight arises from Eva Hoffman's *Exit into History*, which narrates Eastern Europe emerging from communism and embracing market economy. Divided into chapters corresponding to individual countries—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary,

Romania, and Bulgaria—each of which Hoffman visited twice, the author explains Eastern Europe to the Western reader through its places and its people. More objective in its aim and scope than Hampl's memoir, *Exit into History* aims to offer a multifaceted view of Eastern Europe. Unlike *Lost in Translation*, which focuses on Hoffman's individual experience, *Exit into History* relies on other people's perspectives and experience of having lived under communism. By virtue of her Eastern European background and Western education, Hoffman is more aware of the constructedness of the notion of *Eastern Europe* than any other writer discussed in this essay. Thus, her purpose in writing the book is to counterweight the existing patterns of representation with authentic stories of lived experience. To do so, she picks individuals from different backgrounds, walks of life, and sides of the political spectrum.

52 Although Hoffman does not openly address the Western tendency to single out the male perspective, she nevertheless chooses women as her interlocutors whenever possible. Hoffman's work confirms the view expressed by such scholars as Penn and Muller that Eastern European women have been a crucial if often an invisible force behind the Eastern European opposition movements, and that, depending on the country, they suffered different kinds of persecution from the authorities either for their own activities or those of their kin. If there is what Bolton terms a "spousal unit," Hoffman will often be interested in the woman's side of the story and the way the husband's activities infringed upon the wife and the couple's family life, as is the case of Anna Grušová, the ex-wife of a famous Czech novelist, Jiří Gruša. Importantly, Hoffman refuses to use a gendered lens when explaining Eastern Europe to the West. Her narrative of return features renowned male dissidents, such as Adam Michnik, or György Konrád, but is attuned to female dissident stories too, such as that of the journalist Helena Łuczywo, who had been instrumental in the Polish opposition and, after 1989, became the deputy editor of Poland's major daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Well-aware of the fact that to her Western readership it is Adam Michnik who stands for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Hoffman makes sure to foreground Łuczywo's many achievements, including the story of her politicization and the experience of hiding from the militia during Martial Law.

53 Furthermore, Hoffman's approach in *Exit into History* is often rather anti-spectacular, as she avoids catering to the Western tamizdat mentality and penchant for heroism. While visibly appreciative and full of esteem for dissident achievements, Hoffman paints a complex, often ambivalent portrait of Eastern European politics, including stories of ideological betrayals and political turn-coating. Rather than adopt a perfunctorily anti-communist stance, the author gives voice to communists and fellow travelers, both men and women,[11] who fell for the communist project only to find the actual system incommensurate with the ideology it had been built on. In her desire to offer as broad a vista as possible, Hoffman also includes in her account the interlocutors with whom she finds it quite hard to empathize, such as one unrepentant ex-censor who, ironically, now works in the publishing industry. Similarly, she is drawn to the stories of "regular" Eastern Europeans of different political creed living the consequences of the post-1989 transition. Among the women interviewed by Hoffman, there is an aristocrat, a school principal, a successful transition-era entrepreneur, a politician, and a doctor. As in Hampl's memoir, few of these Eastern European women frame their experience in feminist terms, even if they display traits and behavior that could be easily associated with the second-wave feminism's goals. Especially in the case of Poland, there is a sense of what Graff sees as an alternative chronology and a different cultural context from

which Polish feminists are departing. Thus, on her second visit to Warsaw, Hoffman meets Polish women activists protesting against a bill to outlaw abortion which had been legal under communism. At the same time, she notes backlash against feminism as a movement which "was coopted and corrupted by its association with official ideology" (Hoffman 71). In hindsight, Hoffman's work presages the paradoxical post-transition situation of Eastern European women for whom "the freedom regained in 1989 has brought unexpected limitations on economic, social and even reproductive rights" (Drakulić n.p.).

54 While not entirely exempt of cliché, Hoffman's work problematizes some of the Western preconceptions and representation patterns outlined in this essay, including the romanticizing and masculinizing of dissidence, giving way to a more inclusive, comprehensive and, ultimately, humane vision of the area which has all too often been seen as "a lifeless, monochrome realm where people walked bent under the leaden weight of an awful System" (Hoffman xii).

3. Conclusion: Towards a More Nuanced Criticism

55 Eastern Europe's image in the American imaginary has been governed by interesting gender patterns. On the one hand, Eastern Europe has been sexualized and feminized in the Western literature and culture (Glajar and Radulescu); on the other, it has been typified by a male figure, ideally a dissident writer, that responded to the Western yearning for a hero and, to paraphrase Hampl, America's hunger for world culture and for myth. One of the aims of this essay has been to uncover what the gender dynamics in the Western literary images reveals. In the case of the short fiction by Updike, Oates, and Roth, it was interesting to see that the East-West encounters these texts dramatize are mapped in terms of unfulfilled romantic liaisons and erotic tensions which are driven by mutual preconceptions, and, ultimately, stand for the socio-political and cultural divide between America and Eastern Europe/the Soviet Union. Moreover, the female-male configurations narrated in these works reflect the agendas, preconceptions, and fantasies of the American characters as much as their milieu and the national and historical context that shapes them. Suffice it to mention the conflation of essentialism and sexism in Bech's attitude towards both the European East and women, or Nathan Zuckerman's discomfort with Olga's exuberant, sexed-up presence that challenges his notion of what a dissident and a woman should be like.

56 In focusing more on women characters in this essay, I wanted to upset the existing representational, as well as scholarly, imbalance by giving these characters the critical attention they deserve. In this sense, I found Eva Kalinova and Olga in Roth's *The Prague Orgy* particularly gratifying in that both of them resist having their stories narrated and manipulated by others. Similarly, by choosing the texts where the protagonist is a woman, as is the case with Oates's short stories, "My Warszawa:1980" and "Détente," I wished to draw the reader's attention to the presence of women within the East-West cultural diplomacy – a milieu which has been traditionally represented as androcentric. For the same reason, I have included here Hampl's and Hoffman's non-fiction works, for both problematize the practice of favoring male voices and stories by providing a more comprehensive and inclusive view of Eastern Europe and its peoples. Though the inclusion of women's stories, they normalize and humanize Eastern Europe, in addition

to challenging the inaccurate, gender-skewed view of political activism as performed solely by men.

57 When speaking about the Western image of Eastern Europe during the Cold War it is all too easy to write it off as yet another reiteration of Orientalism. However, contemporary research in history and gender studies in East-Central Europe encourages us to look at the Cold-War East-West encounters mapped through literature from a more nuanced perspective, beyond the usual categories of national, political, and cultural difference. As I hope to have demonstrated, one way of doing it may be through shifting the critical focus onto female characters and authors to see how the (under)representation of women plays into the leitmotif of the West's image of the European East – the intertwining of politics and culture – by adding the crucial variable of *gender* into the equation.

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NOTES

1. In this essay, the term "Eastern Europe" is used to denote a geopolitical construct and a mental rubric in the Western imaginative geography of the Cold-War world, and thus a preferred Western designation for the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence.

2. For more on this subject, see for instance Shostak or Gooblar. For Roth's retort to the accusations of misogyny, see for instance his interview with Hermione Lee for *The Paris Review*

3. This double-bind condition is true of women writers in the region under communism. While women's writing grew in volume, female authors often failed to receive due critical attention and, with some exceptions, hovered on the margins of national canons (Hawkesworth).Thus, even though one can easily think about several Eastern European female authors whose works would fit into the imaginative scope of Roth's *Writers from the Other Europe* book series (such as Zofia Nałkowska, Ewa Krall, Eva Kantůrková or Magda Szabó, to name but a few), it is likely that, for the reasons mentioned above, these authors did not attract/were not brought to Roth's attention. Nor did the American author seek to present the literary Other Europe in more inclusive and accurate terms.

4. For more information on Updike's visit to Bulgaria and the prototype of the figure of the Bulgarian poetess, see Briggs and Dojčinović.

5. For more on this topic, see Miller and Bryla, "Under Bech's Eyes."
6. From an imagological perspective, Antonia's fervent feelings for Vassily, her disavowal of his nation's political ideology notwithstanding, follow the pattern identified by Choi Chatterjee: "While a majority of American commentators criticized the repressive political systems of both the tsarist and the Soviet empires, this widespread disapproval of the ruling regimes coexisted with a latent longing to create meaningful emotional relationship with individual Russians and to participate in select Russian cultural and ideological milieus" (88).
7. See for instance Sýkora, Bryla "Writing Prague," and Bryla, "Understanding the Other Europe." For biographical information about Roth's engagement with Prague, see Nadel; Bailey; and Roth-Pierpont.
8. Eva's character is given slightly more prominence in Roth's script for the TV adaptation of *The Prague Orgy*, which has never been produced, as well as the 2019 Czech film production of the novella directed by Irena Pavlásková.
9. It is not the first time that Roth uses sex, or the lack thereof, as a metaphor for politics in his Eastern Europe-inspired fiction. See Kundera for the discussion of the motif of impotence in Roth's *The Professor of Desire* (1977).
10. In a recent film adaptation of *The Prague Orgy*, Olga's exuberant presence is embodied by Russian actress Kseniya Rappoport, whose daring performance contrasts, perhaps too sharply, with Jonas Chernick's slightly too subdued Nathan Zuckerman.
11. Hoffman's inclusion of female communists in her account is noteworthy. If the scholarship on Eastern European dissidence has been to a large extent androcentric, so has the historiography of communism (de Haan 294).

ABSTRACTS

In the American Cold-War imaginary, the representation of Eastern Europe was strongly influenced by male intellectuals and writers from the region, whose works were celebrated in the US not only for their artistic merits but most of all for their political import. As prominent émigrés like Czesław Miłosz explained the region to the Western intellectual public, native-born authors like Philip Roth contributed to shaping the Eastern European literary canon in the US by promoting Kafka, Konwicki, Kundera and other undeniably great if predominantly male authors. In this essay, I take a closer look at the imaginative geographies of the European East in the texts by John Updike, Philip Roth, Joyce Carol Oates, Patricia Hampl, and Eva Hoffman. I argue that while these imaginative geographies are indeed typified by a male figure, which frequently oscillates between the opposite poles of dissidence and conformism, the female figures should not be overlooked. The portrayal of women in the texts under study uncovers (and at times challenges) the fantasies, fears and concerns driving the East-West encounters which these texts dramatize, while at the same time providing interesting insights into gender and social dynamics behind and beyond the Iron Curtain.

INDEX

Keywords: gendered geographies, Eastern Europe, US, Cold War, communism, dissidence

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Martyna Bryla has an MA in English Philology from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and a PhD in English Studies from the University of Málaga, where she is an Assistant Professor. She is interested in literary imagology, particularly in relation to East-Central Europe and the US, as well as the construction of selfhood and otherness in multicultural contexts. She has published on the image of Eastern Europe in the fiction of such authors as Philip Roth, John Updike, and Gary Shteyngart. Her articles have appeared in *ARIEL*, *The Nordic Journal of English Studies*, *The European Review*, and *Philip Roth Studies*, among others. Her latest research is concerned with the intersections between postcommunist and postcolonial studies, and the representation of identity in contemporary migration literature in English.