

Slavenka Drakulić: Dissidence and Rhetorical Voice in Postcommunist Eastern Europe

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What the communist regimes in Eastern and Central European countries left for posterity are scars of oppression. In spite of communist appeals and propaganda, for decades people fought to rein-force democratic values, freedom, and human rights, within and beyond these countries' borders. Moreover, due to communism's oppressive politics, some of the most eloquent representatives of civil societies chose expatriation and dissidence as a political, cultural, and rhetorical way to articulate democratic beliefs from behind the Iron Curtain.¹

Solzhenitsyn, Kundera, Milosz, Cioran, and Eliade are among well-known expatriates who identify themselves as writers of resistance from communist Eastern and Central Europe.² According to their accounts, expatriation and dissidence mark them forever, being both their stigma and their redemption. A marginalized "con-

dition" remains a constant part of their disrupted discourse.³ Joseph Brodsky,⁴ in his appeal to other exiled writers, defines the problem of exile and dissidence as a linguistic confluence joining discourse, questions of identity, and legitimacy of voice, a rhetorical "pendulum" oscillating between moments of "expulsion" into the "capsule" of one's native language, and "the necessity of telling about oppression."⁵

After 1989, the discursive scene in Eastern and Central Europe takes a cultural, political, and rhetorical turn, offering detailed and controversial perspectives on the civil and civic transformations in process in this part of the world.⁶ Emerging from the *samizdat* arena and advocating political change, voices of democracy like Václav Havel, George Konrad, and Adam Michnik, for example, provide insight on the turmoil of transition from communism, on nationalism, and on the difficult political venues these countries face on their road to democracy.⁷

3. Joseph Brodsky calls "exile" a condition. See Joseph Brodsky, "The Condition We Call Exile," in *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, ed. Marc Robinson (San Diego, Cal.: Harcourt Brace, 1994) 3-12.

4. Brodsky reveals the exiled authors' urgent motivation to act rhetorically in my view, through language and speak up against communism. Brodsky writes in "The Condition" that: "our [exiled writers'] greater value and greater function lie in our being unwritten embodiments of the disheartening idea that a freed man is not a free man, that liberation is just the means of attaining freedom and is not synonymous with it" (11).

5. Brodsky, "The Condition," 9-11.

6. J. F. Brown, *Hopes and Shadows: Eastern Europe After Communism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994); and Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

1. Tismaneanu offers an extensive definition of civil societies for Eastern and Central Europe: "[C]ivil society can thus be defined as the ensemble of grassroots, spontaneous, nongovernmental (although not necessarily antigovernmental) initiatives from below that emerge in the post-totalitarian order as a result of a loosening of state controls and the decline as the ideological constraints imposed by the ruling parties. KOR or more recently, the 'Orange Alternative' semi-anarchist group in Poland; Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia; various forms of dissident activities in the Soviet Union; the 'Peace and Human Rights Initiative' in the GDR; and all the independent peace and human rights activities, including the underground presses, samizdat publications, and the flying universities that existed especially in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, can be considered components of the growing civil society" (See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* [New York: Free Press, 1992] 170-71).

2. Some of these dissidents' works that deal specifically with exile and anticommunist ideas are Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, trans. Thomas R. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Milan Kundera, *Milan Kundera and The Art of Fiction: Critical Essays*, ed. Aaron Avi (New York: Garland, 1992); Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage, 1981); Emilie M. Cioran, *Temptation to Exit*, trans. Richard Howard (Chicago, Ill.: Quadrangle, 1970); and Mircea Eliade, *1937-1960, Exile's Odyssey*, trans. Mac Linscott Ricketts (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

7. An extensive body of literature on communist and postcommunist changes reflects also the other, the political context and significance of exile or dissident action in Eastern and Central Europe. See Stanislaw Baranczak, "Before the Thaw: The Beginning of Dissent in Postwar Polish Literature (The Case of Adam Wazyk's 'A Poem for Adults')." *East European Politics and Societies* 3 (1989): 10-15; Miklos Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Václav Havel, *Summer Meditations*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Vintage, 1993); Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited: The Message of a Revolution—A Quarter of a Century After* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983); Gale Stokes, ed., *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Michael Kennedy, "An Introduction to Eastern European Ideology and Identity in Transformation," in Michael Kennedy, ed., *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1-46; Tony Judt, "Nineteen Eighty-Nine: The End of Which European Era?" *Daedalus* 23:3 (1994): 1-19; George Kolankiewicz, "Elites in Search of a Political Formula," *ibid.*, 143-57; Steven Lukes, "Principles of 1989: Reflections on Revolution," in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *Revolutions in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.: Promises vs. Practical Morality* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, the Miller Center Series, 1995), 149-65; Andrei Sakharov, "Our Understanding of Totalitarianism," in

It would be easy to think that, once communism was overthrown and new societies were emerging, writers of dissent from this part of the world were freed from turmoil. Not so. Critical intellectuals are and remain confronted with ontological, political, and rhetorical questions of identity and public voice. Their dissidence implies an inherent conflict, for participants fighting communism or communist ghosts cannot simply throw off one identity and assume another. Rhetorically, these public anticommunist writers carry a double problem throughout their discourse. For, while dissidents speak to the necessity of democratic values and civil society, in doing so, they communicate from their condition of marginalization and resistance.

Such dissident intellectuals bring to the discourse their personal experiences of living in the margins, of recuperating rhetorical voice in the public arena, and of moral responsibilities of democratic existence after the fall of communism. Dissidence, then, becomes a significant rhetorical site for multiple investigations of public discourse. While continuing to advocate civil societies, democratic intellectuals revisit their experiences through discourse and, thus, rhetorically create new definitions of resistance and democratic identity in novel sociocultural contexts. Significantly, dissident intellectuals continue to voice their presence in the public arena, bringing to their audiences appeals for democratic values.⁸

Once communism was defeated, could critical rhetors of resistance's powerful appeals for democracy in the public arenas of their countries fall silent? Do public intellectuals continue to have rhetorical power? Can they change the collective discourse of communist values into individual involvement in creating civil societies? And in their discursive processes, how can these advocates

of democracy reaffirm the need for civil society while legitimizing their own rhetorical voice through language?

Slavenka Drakulić is a writer from the Balkans, one of the critical intellectuals whose life in the margins poses significant rhetorical and political problems. A Croat and also a former Yugoslav, a European who lives part of her time in Eastern Europe and the rest on the western side of the continent, a civic voice with two homes and no land, an advocate of democracy, Drakulić brings to the rhetoric of resistance a unique and intriguing perspective on the relationship between marginalization and discourse. For Drakulić, the chaos of the Balkans starts in 1990 and from then to present times, her search for rhetorical voice in a democracy never stops. Drakulić experiences dissent in postcommunist Eastern Europe, in her native Croatia. Although 1989 represents the "end" of the communist era, for some critical intellectuals in the Balkans, exile and dissent remain political, cultural, and ethnic realities.

An unsettled voice, Drakulić offers in her writings in the 1990s rich narratives of postcommunist and communist times in a country once called Yugoslavia.⁹ For this Croat journalist with dangerous ideas of anti-nationalist resonance, issues of political power remain to be redefined by the rhetorical, cultural, and political identity present in her discourse.¹⁰ Why, then, does a critical intellectual in postcommunist Croatia continue to resist the public arena of nationalist and neo-communist practices? How can Drakulić recapture her legitimacy once her native land is no longer in the realm of political oppression?

Focusing on the discourse of this important voice in postcommunist Eastern Europe, this study argues that critical writers as rhetors recapture rhetorical identity by transforming the condition of dissidence into rhetorical strategies of public legitimation.

8. Peter J. S. Duncan and Maryn Rady, eds., *Towards a New Community: Culture and Politics in Post-Totalitarian Europe* (London: University of London, 1993), 3–15; Tismaneanu, *Remounting Politics*; and Katherine Verdery, *National Identity under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

9. I use interchangeably the terms "critical intellectuals," "public intellectuals," "democratic intellectuals," and "dissidents." In the body of literature on Eastern and Central Europe in communist and postcommunist times, scholars mentioned previously use the terms interchangeably as well, emphasizing such critical voices' political, social, and cultural function of dissidence under communist regimes.

9. Slavenka Drakulić, *How We Survived Communism And Even Laughed* (New York: Norton, 1991); Slavenka Drakulić, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993); and Slavenka Drakulić, *Café Europa: Life after Communism* (New York: Penguin, 1996).

10. Throughout her writings in the 1990s, Drakulić has not changed her perspective on the communist and neo-communist political situation in her country. Drakulić repeatedly claims that in Croatia "communism is not gone. Briefly, the new political leaders [Franjo Tuđman] used democracy to establish their authoritarian system, much like one-party system during communism." (Slavenka Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 1 February 1999).

Thus, the study explores Slavenka Drakulić's discourse of resistance from a rhetorical perspective. The critical examination proposes an insight into Drakulić's rhetorical strategies to legitimize resistance and transform discourse. Specifically, I argue that Drakulić's rhetorical strategies to reconstruct her legitimate voice in and through discourse assist her creation of an important rhetorical action: namely to reevaluate the cultural and political salience of collective and individual responsibility in the creation of civil society in Eastern Europe.

Accordingly, the research examines first Drakulić's dissident rhetoric and her strategies of redefinition in discourse before and after 1989 in Eastern Europe. Second, it explores her rhetorical strategies of redefinition utilizing as a case study an essay I consider representative for the rhetorical legitimation of Drakulić's voice in the public arena. Third, the study investigates this critical intellectual's strategies of legitimation in light of collective and individual responsibilities in postcommunist discourse.

Voices of Dissidence:

Novel Critical Questions on Rhetorical Action

Before examining how Drakulić's strategic resistance regains power and legitimation through a language of dissent, let us visit certain assumptions used in this rhetorical exploration. *Identity or voice*, key terms I use interchangeably throughout the study, constitutes the speaker's rhetorical power in discourse. The inherent premise for using *identity* or *voice* in this analysis is that exile and dissidence test a rhetor's powers as a speaker. Identity constitutes in my view a dynamic inherent dimension of the rhetor's reinvention of self in response to exile and dissidence. *Identity* for such a rhetor comprises of revisitation of the traditional *ethos*, while transforming itself, at the same time, into a *relational* construction of the speaker within the cultural, political, and social context of his or her dissidence or exile. It is toward this rhetorical reconstituting of voice that I gear my examination of Slavenka Drakulić's position as a rhetor of resistance.

In addition, while proposing a rhetorical investigation of the speaker's powers in discourse, this study acknowledges the role

culture plays rhetorically in discourse.¹¹ By interpellating contextual and constitutive forces in discourse, speakers of resistance create cultural discourse as they invoke salient relationships between context and voice in their rhetorical appeals to democratic views. In this sense, culture becomes a dynamic rhetorical concept that transforms speakers, audiences, and critics. Culture as a rhetorical dimension reveals how expatriation and dissent force critical intellectuals from Eastern and Central Europe into a rhetorical crisis, into the silence of non-participation in public discourse. Hence, in order to explore Drakulić's appeals, the significant rhetorical issue of her reinvention of voice becomes the speaker's negotiation of identity against political power in specific cultural discourse. This exploration, then, proposes a notion of rhetoric that *interpellates* the rhetor and his or her culture through discourse.

Slavenka Drakulić: How Many Lives in the Margins?

From a rhetorical perspective, Slavenka Drakulić presents an interesting and atypical case in dissident literature. Unlike other critical intellectuals coming to terms with their existence in limbo for a long time, her identity as an expatriate is relatively new (only eight years) and not total.¹² And unlike fellow Croatian feminist, Dubravka Ugrešić, a voluntary exile, Drakulić refuses to acknowledge such an identity in her writings.¹³ Relatively *new* in

11. A singular definition of "culture" can be a difficult operational concept for this study, as the discourse of dissidents from Eastern and Central Europe reveals different dimensions of communist and postcommunist culture. However, a basic definition of "culture" stemming from the intercultural research in communication can function as an operational assumption for this research. Accordingly, Dodd defines culture as "a holistic set of values, interrelationships, practices, and activities shared by a group of people, influencing their views on the world" (See Carley H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*, 5th ed. [Boston, Mass.: McGraw-Hill, 1998], 36).
12. George Konrad and Andrei Codrescu, for example, had been experiencing alienation for 16 and 25 years respectively. See George Komád, *The Melancholy of Rebirth: Essays from Post-Communist Central Europe, 1989-1994* (San Diego, Cal.: Harcourt Brace, 1995), ix; and Andrei Codrescu, *The Hole in the Flag: A Romanian Exile's Story of Return and Revolution* (New York: Avon, 1991), 11-77.
13. Dubravka Ugrešić, another persona non grata, acknowledges her political fate. Leaving Croatia, Ugrešić comments that "soon I shall be voluntarily joining that ocean of (willing and unwilling) refugees who are knocking at the doors of other countries in the world" (See Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies: Anthropological Essays*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998], 85).

experiencing dissent and marginalization, Drakulić *refuses* to consider her political status of *persona non grata* either a definitional or a definitive experience. More important, from a rhetorical, and I might add, political standpoint, Drakulić cannot remain silent when facing post-1989 neo-communist practices.

Slavenka Drakulić reconstructs her dissident identity in two accounts, *The Balkan Express* and *Café Europa*, published outside of her country. Drakulić's discourse on postcommunist Eastern Europe reveals a rhetor in conflict with forced displacement as a refugee during the Balkan war, vehemently resisting the realities of nondemocratic practices in her native land. Writing from the margins, her discourse always already engages the *other* discourse (pun intended) on Croatian realities. For, in contrast to Drakulić's articulations, the official account in Croatia offers an explanation for the casualties of an absurd war, providing a rationale for authoritarian politics or nationalistic "fantasies of salvation" (to borrow the title from Tismaneanu's recent work on the complex political realities in the area).¹⁴

Drakulić's life, identity, and rhetorical powers carry a "before and after 1989" narrative. Before 1989, she is settled as a critical intellectual and journalist in the former Yugoslavia, publishing in one of the most important newspapers in Zagreb, *Danas*.¹⁵ Unlike most dissidents from Eastern Europe, Drakulić's life in the margins of political opposition remains without political consequences.¹⁶ Able to publish actively in magazines and newspapers in the West,¹⁷ Drakulić has a passport in hand and the freedom to travel in both Western and Eastern Europe, enjoying, as she ac-

knowledges, a "much higher standard of living and greater freedom . . . than did [those people in] the rest of the communist states."¹⁸

After the 1989 revolutions, expecting a civil democracy to follow in the Balkans, Drakulić carries a bewildered voice. History, it seems, has a different political experience in store for this land. The fall of the communist regime brings with it the disintegration of the six federal republics called, once upon a time, Yugoslavia.¹⁹ All of a sudden, the war in the Balkans between Serbia and Croatia, and later between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, presents a different reality, a reality of battles, nationalist claims, and civil unrest. Her homeland, Croatia, is proclaimed independent in January 1992. As a new state, Croatia posits a novel political and cultural question, since "no one is allowed *not* [my emphasis] to be a Croat."²⁰ Drakulić, Ugresić, and many other critical voices charge that Croat independence and Tudjman's nationalist and authoritarian regime do not bring a civil society and freedom in the country.²¹ Can it be that the political transformation of Croatia remains a skeptical scene with no guarantees for a democracy?²²

14. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
15. Robert Kaplan retells his encounter with Slavenka Drakulić in Zagreb. He writes about her as a settled voice of opposition, identified as "a Zagreb journalist who writes in Croatian for *Danas* (*Today*), a local magazine, and in English for *The New Republic* and *The Nation*" (See Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* [New York: Vintage, 1994], 3–29, 6).
16. According to her own description in "A Chat with my Censor," Drakulić wrote articles on cultural politics or on Albanians in the province of Kosovo prior to the fall of communism, in 1988. See Slavenka Drakulić, "A Chat with my Censor," in *How We Survived Communism And Even Laughed* (New York: Norton, 1991), 77–82, 78.
17. Drakulić has been a contributing editor at *The Nation* since 1986. She also publishes often in *The New Republic*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. For example, see Slavenka Drakulić, "Voting Their Fears in Croatia," *New York Times* 21 June 1997, A21.

18. Continuing her explanation, Drakulić expands on the benefits a passport could bring to the Yugoslav population: "We had refrigerators and washing machines when others did not, and could travel abroad, see American movies, buy a graduation dress in Milan or spend our summer holidays in Greece or Spain. Yes, essentially it is a comparison between prison cells, but the comfort of your cell makes a lot of difference when you are imprisoned" (See Drakulić, "My Father's Guilt," in *Café Europa*, 143–60, 149). Also, Drakulić repeatedly acknowledges her different status in comparison with the rest of Eastern and Central Europeans in the 1980s. She explains that: "[H]aving a Yugoslav passport meant that you could travel both to the West, and to the East, and the USSR was the only country in the communist bloc that I did not visit" (See Drakulić, "Why I Never Visited Moscow," in *Café Europa* 22–32, 28).
19. See Marcus Tanner, "Comrade Tito Is Dead," in *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1997), 203–11; and Tismaneanu, "Vindictive and Messianic Mythologies: Post-Communist Nationalism and Populism," in *Fantasies*, 65–88.
20. Drakulić, "Overcome by Nationhood," in *Balkan*, 52.
21. Tanner notices the authoritarian practices similar to communist ones. Mixing nationalist vision with the legacy of communist politics, Tudjman's regime raises many questions in the international arena regarding freedom of speech and freedom of speech. In addition, the 1996 "free" elections constitute yet one more remainder of the communist practices in the public arena. Tanner states that: "[A]longside the disturbing new habit of judging everyone in Croatia's history on the simple basis of whether they were *dr zavorotorni* (state-building) or not, there were other signs that Tudjman and the HDZ had a *decidedly skewed view on democracy* [my emphasis]" (See Marcus Tanner, "Postscript: Freedom Iran," *Croatia*, 299–305, 303).
22. Both Ugresić and Drakulić present doubt in terms of the political future of the new Croatian state. See Ugresić, *Culture*, 49–55; and Drakulić, *Balkan*, 53–60.

Leaving the experience of refugees in the Balkan war aside,²³ in the hope of a brighter future, Drakulić finds out that her right to speak up against the government is denied in the Croatian media in the name of nationalistic cleansing of the public arena.²⁴ Hence, the year 1993 marks a rhetorical, political, and cultural turn for Slavenka Drakulić. Her questioning of the regime, her writings in the domestic and international press prove uncomfortable for the new authorities.²⁵ If Croatia is a democratic regime, asks Drakulić, why is the discourse of political resistance and dissidence not allowed in the new public arena? And why is the media controlled by the nationalist frenzy of Tudjman's rhetoric? Can it be that communist practices are back with a vengeance, only under a different name in this new state?²⁶

The response to her critique is dramatic. Called a "witch" in an article entitled "Croatian Feminists Rape Croatia," she is expelled from the press in her country.²⁷ Hunted, together with four other women writers for her "anti-war, anti-nationalistic, and individual standpoint,"²⁸ Drakulić crosses the *cultural* borders of exile, becoming a persona non grata in Tudjman's Croatia.²⁹ A "traitor

of the Croatian people," Drakulić is forced to enter life in the margins of discourse, this time, on feminist charges.³⁰ One could say, then, that Drakulić exists rhetorically and politically in more than one marginalized discourse, namely in the realm where women's voices are barely audible in a male-oriented culture.³¹ Thus, harassed in the media, unable to present her opinions in the new public arena, her public voice is silenced.³² In postcommunist Croatia, Drakulić becomes a political dissident.

Publicly banned, Drakulić loses her public and professional identity in Croatia, as her collaboration with the newspaper *Danas* ceases.³³ A critical intellectual, a witch, and a feminist, her main offense was her overt criticism of "nationalist homogenization and the non-democratic new regime."³⁴ Oblivion is her punishment.³⁵ The only way Drakulić is present in the Croat press is in well-articulated attacks against her.³⁶ Drakulić explains that: "*they* [my emphasis] publish only criticism towards my writings."³⁷ And yet, Drakulić resists her *non grata* status, mentioning her

23. Drakulić, "On Becoming A Refugee," in *Balkan*, 29.

24. Tanner presents the problem of liberated media in Tudjman's new political arena: "The new government were soon determined to control the media almost as much as the old Communists, and much more so than the Račan-era Communists had been. The new HDZ bosses were strong nationalists with an intolerant streak. Milovan Stibić, director of the new Croatian news agency Hina, was typical of the group. 'Many of these journalists are of mixed origins,' he scoffed, referring to the anti-HDZ press, 'one Croat parent, one Serb. How can such people provide an objective picture of Croatia? ... The only place you can read the truth about President Tudjman is in Hina news'" (See Tanner, *Croatia*, 221-41, 230).

25. The 1996 elections in Croatia appear, according to the western press, to have been tainted by nationalist politics. See Chris Hedges, "In Croatia's Capital, Politics and Democracy Don't Mix Well," *New York Times*, 2 May 1996, A10.

26. Tanner, *Croatia*, 299-305.

27. Martha Halpert, reporting on the fifty-ninth International PEN Congress held in Zagreb in 1993, writes in *Partisan Review* about this incident: "The guesses from abroad focused on an article, published in the private tabloid *Globus* last December 11th, which denounced five outspoken female Croatian writers as 'witches.' ... Two of the brutally attacked women, Slavenka Drakulić and Dubravka Ugrešić ... are members of PEN" (See Martha Halpert, "The Fifty-ninth International PEN Congress," *Partisan Review* 3 [1993]: 450-52, 452).

28. Halpert, "The Fifty-ninth International PEN," 452.

29. Dubravka Ugrešić, partner in "crime" with Drakulić and others, presents the Croat political discrimination on feminist basis, as she offers more quotes from the same article appeared in the Croatian press: "The accusations are mostly warranted by these women's feminist actions, depicted as follows: 'In 'democratic' Croatia, those women have been proclaimed 'traitors,' 'women who conspire against Croatia,' a serious dan-

ger,' 'women who sell their homeland for their own gain,' 'amoral beings,' 'a group of unhappy, frustrated women,' ... and finally 'witches,'" (Ugrešić, *Culture*, 124).

30. Drakulić, e-mail with the author, 18 February 1999.

31. Rada Iveković is another of the "witches" who suffered discrimination and had to become a voluntary exile. See Rada Iveković, "Women, Nationalism, and War: 'Make Love Not War,'" *Hypatia* 8:4 (1993): 113-27.

32. Drakulić writes that "the new political leaders used democracy to establish their authoritarian system, much alike one-party system during communism. If you write this, however, you become an enemy of the system, i.e. a dissident [my emphasis]. You can not get a job, you are harassed in the media, etc. which all happened to me. So you have to go abroad in order to survive!" Drakulić even calls herself an "enemy of the state." Personal correspondence with (Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 1 February 1999).

33. After 1992, the liberated media becomes a problem for the Tudjman's political arena. Determined to control it, the new government returns to the old practices of communist censorship. Press releases continue to report abusive and authoritarian measures taken against journalists. Similar instances are mentioned in the articles: "CPJ 'fall Time for Croat Journalists,'" *Editor and Publisher*, 12 October 1996: 25; and Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 18 February 1999.

34. From 1993 on, the writer admits it becomes "impossible to publish anything in Croatia," Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 18 February 1999.

35. A sample of such an attack is published by C. Michael McAdams, "C. Michael McAdams Responds to Michelle Kakutani's New York Review of Slavenka Drakulić's *Ghost of Communist Past*," *The Zagrebian*, 9 April 1997. A reprint of a position signed by C. Michael McAdams, University of San Francisco, this attack is just one of his vehement responses sponsored by the Croatian Information Services. His recent *Croatia, Myth and Reality: The Final Chapter* intends precisely to rectify all cultural and political misconceptions related to Croatia. See C. Michael McAdams, *Croatia, Myth and Reality: The Final Chapter* (Arcadia, Ca.: CIS Monographs, 1997).

36. Drakulić, e-mail with the author, 18 February 1999.

publications in Croatia in 1995 in *Feral Tribune*, one of the very few opposition newspapers.³⁸ For the most part, however, Drakulić remains with no readership in her homeland, no presence in the Croatian media, expatriated, and yet refusing to accept her new political status. What happens, then, to her rhetorical redefinition of identity in response to dissidence?

Drakulić repositions herself as a critical writer and rhetor in search of civil societies throughout Eastern Europe. Drakulić moves away, fighting old enemies like communism and authoritarian regimes, relentlessly promoting individual responsibilities to create democratic societies, a view she articulates in her collection of essays *Café Europa: Life After Communism*, in 1996. A voice of resistance on a mission to reveal the horrid traces of communism, Drakulić travels Central and Eastern Europe in search of answers for her own vocabulary of democracy. Touring the trails of postcommunist change in Europe, she never forgets her marked life in the margins, as an Eastern European.³⁹ Drakulić remembers: "I know, they know, and the police officers know that barriers exist and that citizens from Eastern Europe are going to be second-class citizens still for a long time to come, regardless of the downfall of communism or the latest political proclamations. Between us and them there is an invisible wall."⁴⁰

In response to her own role as a dissident journalist away from her readership and from the public arena of her homeland, Drakulić invokes her identity in relation to the linguistic and cultural dimensions of the communist *past* and the postcommunist *present*. Thus, time and grammar become her counterpart context in which she recreates her voice of resistance against nationalism and the authoritarian regime in Croatia. "Introduction: First-Person Singular," the very first essay of her writings on postcommunism in Eastern Europe, reveals Drakulić's rhetorical strategy to reconstruct the dissident voice through the cultural powers of language.⁴¹

38. Drakulić publishes *The Taste of a Man* in Croatia in 1995. Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 18 February 1999, 39. Married to a well-known Swedish journalist, Richard Swartz, Drakulić can use both Western and Eastern European identities. She mentions in one of the essays that identities in intercultural marriages reveal the cultural and political barriers between Eastern and Western Europe. See Drakulić, "Buying a Vacuum Cleaner," in *Café*, 109–18.

40. Drakulić, "Invisible Walls Between Us," in *Café*, 21.

41. Drakulić "Introduction: First-Person Singular," in *Café Europa* 1–6.

Therefore, as she recaptures her identity as a public intellectual in postcommunist Eastern Europe, how does the speaker articulate a voice of democracy through her discourse of resistance?

The Old Paradigm in Croatia: Resisting Memories of Communism

In "Introduction: First-Person Singular" Drakulić offers a rhetorical account of her symptomatic political opposition to the still-communist Croatia. The writer recaptures rhetorical force as a speaker of dissent in relation to the cultural and political metaphor of "we" and "I." This simple contrastive paradigm aligns the writer's voice with discursive counterparts in communist and neo-communist times in Croatia and the Balkans.⁴² Especially for Eastern European writers, pronouns represent strategic choices to invoke cultural walls of exclusion that words create in circumstances of dissent.⁴³

Presenting herself as a political and rhetorical user of pronouns, Drakulić captures the rhetorical tensions that "I" versus "we" carry in the new political, cultural, and social Eastern Europe. More important, the author provides reflexive and reflective meanings to the cultural and political dyad "I" versus "we," turning it into a powerful appeal for democracy. Her claims not only address her audiences back home, but also all people aware of communist ideologies of past or present times. Rhetorically, her strategic relation between "I" and "we" becomes a cultural and political move to differentiate two conceptual cultural identities: communist versus dissident. In the discursive process, Drakulić reconstitutes herself as a promoter of democratic values in Eastern Europe, op-

42. In my correspondence with Drakulić, the author overtly states that "communism is not gone" in Croatia. This is the reason I refer to *neo-communist* and *post-communist* times as synonymous terms for the Croat political situation after 1989. Personal correspondence with Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 11 Feb. 1999.

43. Most of the Eastern and Central European dissident writers refer in their writings to the cultural difference between "we" and "they" implying the political and sociocultural dichotomy between official and underground discourse in communist times. Baranczak, when analyzing dissidence, refers to this important rhetorical strategy in yet another dissident's discourse, Miklós Haraszti; see Stanislaw Baranczak, "The State Artist," *Breathing Under Water: And Other East European Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) 87. George Konrad makes use of the same strategy in "15 March: A Colorful Day," *Melancholy of Rebirth*, 130–36.

posing anew communist practices. Objecting strongly to any communist and neo-communist experiences, Drakulić provides a powerful account of political ostracism before and after the so-called fall of the Iron Curtain in the Balkans. And in doing so, Drakulić reinvents her discourse as a grammar of dissidence, to paraphrase Burke.⁴⁴

Empowering her voice as the grammatical voice of the singular "I," Drakulić asserts her dissident identity as a threat for any communist and neo-communist public sphere.⁴⁵ For, both in past and in present political contexts in Croatia as her homeland and her cultural point of reference, "the first-person singular" is "exiled from public and political life," turning it into a voice of dissidence.⁴⁶

Similarly, Drakulić explores how the first-person pronoun constitutes a rhetorical gauge exposing the cultural and political barriers between the author and communist or neo-communist times in Croatia. Drakulić articulates resistance by juxtaposing a rhetorical action of saying no as a definition of the "I" against communist contexts:

How does a person who is a product of a totalitarian society learn responsibility, individuality, initiative? By saying "no." But this begins with saying "I," thinking "I" and doing "I"—and in public as well as in private. Individuality, the first-person singular, always existed under communism, it was just exiled from public and political life and exercised in private.⁴⁷

Individuality is the locus for her voice of dissent, the "I" represents the rhetorical impetus for her identity of difference, her *re-jective* terra firma, her own outside.⁴⁸ The negation implies more

44. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

45. Drakulić, "Introduction," 3.

46. Konrad writes about identical cultural and political delineations in grammatical form between official and underground arenas in communist Hungary: "The famous dissident writes that: '[L]ooking backward, we must keep in mind that communist censorship did more than prohibit; it affirmed, affirmed all manner of things. Moreover, it did so in exalted tones and as often as not in the first-person plural [my emphasis]' (Konrad, *Melanchoy*, 90).

47. Drakulić, "Introduction," 3–4.

48. In a similar way, playing against each other the cultural with the political connotations of pronouns in Eastern Europe, Codrescu writes that in Romania "we knew why we existed, why we were 'us' and not 'they' . . . why the world was the way it was" (5). (See Andrei Codrescu, *The Disappearance of the Outsider: A Manifesto for Escape* [Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990], 1–37).

than a rhetorical tension marking the grammatical distinction between first-person pronouns in singular and plural form. In this discursive relationship, Drakulić affirms her own voice of resistance against the "safe, anonymous 'us'" of the collective brought about by communism.⁴⁹

Rhetorically, this dyad transforms Drakulić into an outsider, a critical voice isolated from life as part of "we," apart from the mass mentality of possible nationalistic or neo-communist views. Thus, Drakulić turns the cultural relationship between "I" and "we" into a rhetorical and political locus of conflict, into the very nexus of her voice of dissent. Strategically, as she refuses the "we," Drakulić recaptures the communist times as part of her resistance. Accordingly, the strategic play of pronouns as cultural and political articulations become the rhetorical locus for the author's own voice in discourse. For, when looking at "we," Drakulić re-members that:

I hate the first-person plural. But it is only now . . . that I realize how much I hate it. My resistance to it is almost physical, because more than anything else, to me it represents a physical experience. I can smell the scent of bodies pressed against me in a 1 May parade. . . . I can feel the crowd pushing me forward, all of us moving as one, a single body—a sort of automatic puppet-like motion because no one is capable of anything else.⁵⁰

For Slavenka Drakulić, the first-person plural constitutes her enemy, personifying everything communism means or has ever meant. Memories triggered by the plural pronoun remind her of the ideology and propaganda pressed on the populations. Re-membering mandatory participation in popular and populist events in communism, the writer reacts to the transformation of people into "a single body," a "puppet-like" group. As the first-person plural gets personified and rhetorically transformed into communist cultural discourse, Drakulić vehemently rejects the public sphere of the collective, responding as a promoter of individualism (equating, culturally, in this part of the world, democratic freedom of speech), and thus, the dissident voice. After all, this writer is ostracized precisely because she continues to say "I,"

49. Drakulić, "Introduction," 4.

50. Drakulić, "Introduction," 1–2.

remaining excluded and in disagreement with the popular and more collective government of present-day Croatia.⁵¹

In order to bring this criticism to present-day Croatia, the writer invokes another rhetorical strategy—a temporal comparison of past and present, a powerful reminder of the political and social significance of the year 1989 in the area. Delineating in this grammatical dyad the rhetorical identities of communist versus democratic participants in society, Drakulić posits herself within different times to emphasize her political opposition through discourse. Once again, using language and grammar as rhetorical and cultural invocations of dissent, Drakulić turns the past tense into a rhetorical strategy in order to reject the communist ideology of Eastern or Central Europe. Thus, thinking of the past, Drakulić recalls that she “grew up with ‘we’ and ‘us’ in the kindergarten, at school, in the pioneer and youth organizations, in the community, at work.”⁵² In addition, as a journalist and a critical intellectual, the author reminisces on the political dangers of using the first-person singular, on the problems a speaker like herself faces in and through the language of individuality in a not-yet-democratic society.⁵³

Writing meant testing out the borders of both language and gender, pushing them away from editorials and first-person plural and towards first-person singular. The consequences of using the first-person singular were often unpleasant. You stuck out; you risked being labeled an “anarchic” element (not even a person), perhaps even a dissident. For that you would be sacked, so you used it sparingly, and at your own risk. This was called self-censorship.⁵⁴

Here, her discursive resistance becomes a rhetorical strategy of opposition to and resistance against communism and its haunting ghosts, a call to reclaim individual responsibility in creating democratic life in Eastern Europe. Depicting the life dictated by the “we” of communist times, Drakulić delineates clearly the fluid insider and outsider position of any professional in the communist media before (and after) 1989.⁵⁵ In communist times in Eastern

51. Drakulić, “Introduction,” 2.

52. Drakulić, “Introduction,” 2.

53. Drakulić was never a member of the Communist party. See Drakulić, “My Father’s Guilt,” in *Café*, 143–60.

54. Drakulić, “Introduction,” 2–3.

55. Baranczak refers to similar rules of censorship in the Polish press under communism. See Stanislaw Baranczak, *Breathing Under Water*, 61–67.

Europe, whenever a person attempted to speak out against the regime, that individual became an outsider, “an ‘anarchic’ element,” or “even a dissident.”⁵⁶

Of course, the fall of communism in 1989 should have changed all that. Drakulić denies that it did in Croatia. With this strategic move, her indictment of the neo-communist regime takes shape. Blaming the war on the collective mentality of nationalism, Drakulić relentlessly criticizes the political, cultural, and rhetorical consequences of such a mind set. For, she argues, “that hideous first-person plural” infects “20 million-bodied mass swinging back and forth,” making them follow “their leaders into mass hysteria.”⁵⁷ Thus, the rhetorical relationship between time and identity helps her to reconstitute herself against both past and present communist times in Croatia.

Drakulić transforms her rhetorical voice from that of a critical intellectual of past communism to that of the present dissident living in the outside. As an advocate of democracy, her individual voice can no longer be heard in the new Croatia. Left without readership in her homeland, Drakulić explains how the communist past and neo-communist present call forth in discourse identities like hers. As in communist times, individual citizens “had no chance to voice his [her] protest or his [her] opinion, not even his [her] fear” in the postcommunist Balkans:

He could only leave the country—and so people did. Those who used “I” instead of “we” in their language *had to escape* [my emphasis]. It was this fatal difference in grammar that divided them from the rest of their compatriots. As a consequence of this “us,” no civic society developed. . . . As under communism, individualism was punished—individuals speaking out against the war, or against nationalism, were singled out as “traitors.”⁵⁸

Accordingly, exile, particularly her own unacknowledged expatriation, is interconnected with dissidence, within the user of “I,” within the action of saying no. Drakulić has not so much distanced herself from her Balkan homeland, as she has from pre-1989 communism. In her view, and not only hers, it appears that the Croat

56. Drakulić, “Introduction,” 3.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

regime has not thrown off the communist past; and therefore, those who dissent remain distanced between their democratic dreams and the realities of 1989 and beyond. Thus, locating herself in an account on present neo-communist and nationalist practices, the writer emphasizes that, like her own case, critical voices of anti-nationalism *remain* singled out, ostracized as traitors, forced to leave their homeland.⁵⁹

In other words, even if Drakulić does not explicate her own status in the essay, she acknowledges that people who use the first-person singular continue to live as dissidents and expatriates in countries like hers, after 1989. As the writer links her political agenda to her right of freedom of speech, Drakulić sees the “fatal difference in grammar” as a conflicting relationship between her identity and the present regime in Croatia. A “traitor” in and through her rhetorical action, Drakulić experiences and articulates marginalization and dissent.⁶⁰ The relationship Drakulić constructs between voice and past-present communist practices starts in language, accruing rhetorical and sociocultural force. “Introduction: First-Person Singular” becomes her grammatical, rhetorical, and cultural discourse of resistance, capturing an unsettled identity determined to fight (yet again) neo-communist practices in Eastern and Central Europe.

Individualism: A Necessary Strategy in Postcommunist Rhetoric

Can, then, a rhetoric of dissidence offer novel relationships between individualist and collective perspectives in the public sphere of Eastern Europe? I argue that Drakulić’s rhetoric of dissent assists postcommunist discourse in creating a democratic public sphere. More important, Drakulić’s rhetorical and cultural contribution emphasizes the role of individualist and collectivist discourse in a democracy. Norman Manea, a well-known dissident from Romania, supports similar views, explaining the meaning of “I” as a political threat to communist regimes:

It is hard to believe that in a totalitarian society the “I” could survive, and yet inferiority was a mode of resistance, however unavoidably imperfect. It [the “I”] acted as a center for our moral being, as a means of respiration from the corrupting aggressiveness of the environment; as a hope, however uncertain, for the integrity of conscience. The “I” persists, even in the totalitarian environment . . . the site of struggle between the centripetal necessity to preserve a secret, codified identity and the centrifugal tendency towards liberation.⁶¹

An unsettled and unsettling rhetor, Drakulić does not intend to solve the critical, cultural, and rhetorical problem between the two strategic appeals. Not satisfied with a simple contradictory relationship between the communist and the postcommunist appeals embedded in the individualist or collectivist nouns and pronouns, Drakulić layers multiple and complex rhetorical loci for such strategic usage, precisely to remind, evoke, and invoke the political, cultural, and social power of “I” versus “we.”

Accordingly, by collapsing identity along the past and the postcommunist realities of her country, Drakulić reconstitutes her voice as a speaker rejecting nationalist and neo-communist practices in the Balkans. In other words, the “I” versus “we” rhetorical strategy allows Drakulić to respond to “otherness.”⁶² Drakulić turns the paradigm of individualism and collectivism into a dynamic trope of communist and postcommunist existence. For Drakulić, language becomes the main repository of the cultural and political connotations for former communist regimes.

Recalling abusive usages of language in communism and contrasting them with the powers of civic rights in a democracy, the Croat dissident recaptures legitimacy for her own rhetoric of resistance. In recent electronic correspondence with the author, Drakulić continues to remind audiences of the rhetorical role of “we” as collective enemies of the democratic, individualistic voice

61. Norman Manea, “Common Historical Roots,” *Partisan Review* 4 (1992): 577.

62. According to Drakulić, the powers of language, the strategy of “naming them, by reducing them to the other” in discourse lead to horrors like the killings of Jews in World War or the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans (144). The author reacts precisely against the refusal of Croatian audiences to reflect on their cultural and political discourses, when naming “the other.” For, continuing to use such vocabulary, places audiences as complacent participants in the discourse of war (See Drakulić, *Balkan*, 144–45).

of postcommunist discourse.⁶³ The Croat writer articulates with these rhetorically sensitive pronouns a locus for an identity free of communism, calling audiences ethymematically to join a freed paradigm of political discourse in Eastern Europe.

Where Now? Are We Done with Dissidents and Exile in Postcommunist Times?

As argued here, I consider Drakulić's appeals for democratic discourse extremely important for all scholarship on contemporary public discourse. In my view, critical intellectuals' reinvention of voice in Eastern Europe reveals important rhetorical, cultural, and sociopolitical perspectives on resistance and democracy in a world at the beginning of a new millennium. Ten years after the Eastern and Central European revolutions and the demise of communism, the discourse of such cultural and political luminaries continues to be questioned or revered, challenged or challenging, as these societies change toward civil arenas of democracy.⁶⁴ After 1989, the discourse on nationalism, on difference and tolerance, and on ethnic cleansing raises questions for the new Europe, for western, central, and eastern democratic communities altogether.

What is happening in the Croatian public sphere, after Tujđman, after a new president, Stipe Mešić, and a new prime minister, Ivica Račan, won the elections early in 2000?⁶⁵ Croatia has chosen a new government, a new public discourse, and new expectations for a democratic life in Eastern Europe. Even Drakulić recognizes that some members of the new Croatian parliament are as much part of the democratic intellectuals group as she is.⁶⁶ Thus, can one say that critical intellectuals have finally completed their political and rhetorical role for democratic discourse in the area?

63. Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 18 February 1999.

64. Most recently, Tismaneanu reiterates the importance of critical intellectuals in Eastern and Central European post-1989 discourse. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Fighting for the Public Sphere: Democratic Intellectuals under Postcommunism," in eds., *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* (Sofia: Anohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu, (Budapest: Central European UP, 2000) 153–75.

65. A large number of reports in the press cover the changes in Croatia, like "Croatia: All Change in Croatia," *The Economist*, Jan 8, 2000, v. 354, 8152, 46; "Croatian Elections," *Europe*, February 2000, S3; or "Croatia—Edgy Start," *The Economist*, 8 April 2000, v. 355, 8156, 56.

66. Drakulić agrees that "yes, some of my friends are in the government, and this govern-

In a recent interview, Drakulić clarifies that the political changes in Croatia are bringing new alliances—some intellectuals "who were for Tujđman" are now "shifting towards the new government," a government with "more of a democratic potential," yet where opportunism rules. The (former) dissident warns (again) that: "Croatia—as was Yugoslavia—is still a society with very small margins for intellectuals to be independent."⁶⁷

In this novel context, what happens to dissidence, to voices of resistance and to the "I" versus "we" mind set? Leaving the persona *non grata* status, after eight years of dissent and a decade of postcommunism, Drakulić agrees that the "nationalist 'we' that ruled the public sphere is not dominant any longer." And yet, Slavenska Drakulić immediately adds that, in spite of all changes, "no power likes independent minds, people who think independently . . . So you are always on the margin of society, even if your friends are in the government."⁶⁸

Most likely, Drakulić's rhetorical identity of resistance is needed more than ever in the discourse of democracy in Eastern Europe. Her articulations of voice against the social, political, rhetorical and cultural past remain necessary in a public arena waiting to be freed from oppression.

ment has more of a democratic potential. But I do not see that . . . yesterday's dissidents play any role" in the new Croatian public sphere. (Personal Correspondence with Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 26 July 2000).

67. Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 26 July 2000.

68. Drakulić, e-mail to the author, 26 July 2000.

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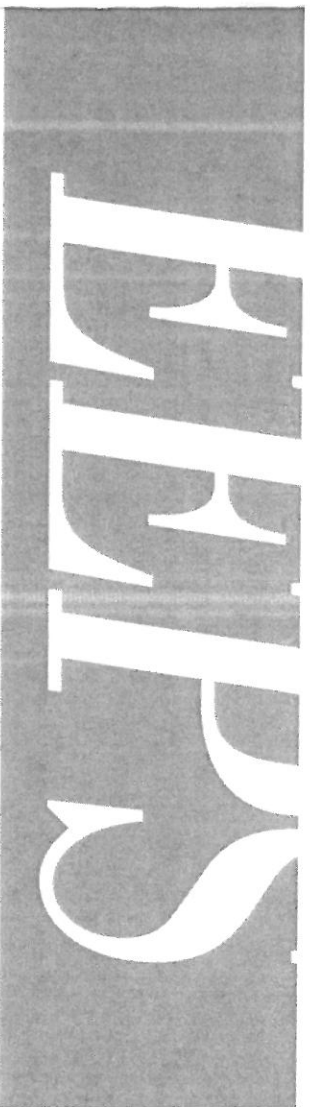
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