INTRODUCTION

Ambiguous Transitions

Gender, the State, and Everyday Life in Romania from Socialism to Postsocialism

> How was our life then? The fact is, we found jobs, we were promoted, and we got raises … it didn't seem difficult to me. During the communist period they guaranteed us a job, well-paid or not so well-paid, each person was important in their own way. We led a very industrious life. I came home from work, I washed, I ironed, I made food … and after all that I embroidered and knit. I led a very active life. Now I feel awful because it's very difficult to pass from a period full of activity to a period where time is dead. Now I'm looking for work so that I won't go crazy.[1]
>
> —Maria, unemployed electrician (b. 1955)

For someone raised in an era of alarmist rhetoric about the "evil empire" and made-for-TV movies depicting the aftereffects of nuclear war, excerpts such as the one quoted above seem highly unlikely, if not wholly implausible. While growing up in the United States, my visions of life "over there" were of crumbling apartment blocks, factories spewing pollutants, and empty store shelves and bread lines. Glimmers of hope did appear in the form of TV broadcasts of Lech Wałęsa and protesting workers, but being nine years old when Solidarity formed I was too young to appreciate the movement's significance—or the irony of its very existence. And, even if I had, such images reinforced rather than challenged existing perceptions of life east of the Brandenburg Gate as repressive. Moreover, while I understood that the United States was engaged in a Cold War with the Soviet Union, I really didn't think much about the countries that fell into the latter camp—one reason why I failed, in third grade, to place the word "West" in front of the word "Germany" on the envelope containing a letter to my transatlantic pen pal. Over the course of the 1980s, I developed an interest in history and the reality of this division had sunk in. By 1989 I simply took it for granted that a wall separated East and West Berlin—and would continue to do so for the majority, if not the entirety, of my lifetime.

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When the Wall unexpectedly “fell” on 9 November 1989, I was in Austria, about to celebrate my birthday. I greeted the news with shock and excitement and even contemplated jumping on the next train to Berlin, which, much to my continued regret, I did not do. Shock and excitement were also sentiments felt by people in the region. So too was hope. Believing that liberal democracy had finally triumphed over communist tyranny, policymakers, intellectuals, and ordinary East Europeans hoped that pluralism would be a panacea for the stagnation, corruption, and malaise that had characterized the Eastern Bloc.[2]

Over a quarter of a century later, the effects of these transformations have been mixed. While most countries in the region have “returned to Europe” by joining NATO and the European Union, national and local particularities, as well as larger global processes, have shaped the character of economic and political change in the region.[3] As a result, for some the transition to postsocialism has been less than hoped for, and, indeed, outright disappointing. This is especially the case in Romania where corruption, high rates of inflation, rising income disparity, and the curtailment of social entitlements have, alongside more positive developments such as free speech, association, and travel, characterized the post-1989 period. This is not to claim that Maria, the woman quoted at the beginning of this chapter, desires a return to socialism. Rather she, like others I spoke with, desires the security and stability—or perceived security and stability—of the old system.

While repudiated as a political system, socialism, as a way of life, continues to shape how individuals think about their government, society, and themselves.[4] Rising inequality and downward mobility serve in part to explain people’s positive appraisal of the socialist past. Perhaps had the transition been smoother, quicker, and more just, their assessment would be less generous? Although this is a plausible and, indeed, tempting interpretation, we must contend with reality, in this case what has come to pass since 1989. Thus, rather than simply writing off Maria’s recollection as nostalgic, we must view it as a genuine and legitimate perspective on the past. We must also place it within the larger story of her life, in which positive memories mingle with negative ones. Alongside working third shift and desperately searching for baby formula in the dead of winter, Maria recalled weeklong holidays at the seaside and gatherings with friends and family. Her reflections reveal that there is no simple, coherent narrative of life under socialism, but rather multiple and, at times, contradictory ones. This underscores the importance of analyzing larger political and structural transformations alongside local and everyday practices. It also points

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to the complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities of socialist modernization and everyday life in Romania.

This book seeks to shed light on these complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities through an analysis of socialist policies, media representations, and women's life stories in Romania from the advent of socialist rule to the present. Although triumphalist narratives extolling the virtues of capitalism and liberal democracy have been subject to increased scrutiny since the global financial crisis of 2008, interpretations emphasizing the criminality, illegality, and inhumanity of former communist regimes remain salient.[5] In Romania, this is evident in the many autobiographies, journals, and memoirs that have been published by former political prisoners, peasants, intellectuals, and others who suffered marginalization or repression under socialism. Because victims of communist repression have dominated historical investigations and public discussions of the past, scholars studying individuals who remained comparatively free of repression or who managed to muddle through, in some cases even experiencing upward mobility, are faced with a particular moral dilemma since, "after one learns about so many broken lives, it actually seems insensitive to remember anything less tragic about the communist period."[6] Accordingly, stories such as Maria's are considered of unequal value, written off as nostalgic products of selective remembering rather than reflections of an authentic lived reality. However, privileging particular experiences over others, aside from being an exercise in historical cherry-picking, can yield simplistic narratives of the past that equate personal trauma with national trauma and obscure the polyvalent meanings of people's lived experiences. This approach also produces a dichotomous view of state and society that neglects the fluidity and interconnection between the two, while glossing over the complexity of human behaviors, beliefs, and relationships.

This book is premised on the belief that examining the oppressive alongside the emancipatory, the monotonous alongside the joyous, the ordinary alongside the extraordinary—and all that falls between these extremes—yields not only a fuller, more nuanced portrait of state socialism and everyday life, but is a historical necessity. This is particularly true of Romanian women whose lived experiences are often interpreted through the prism of pronatalist policies and are overshadowed by heroic narratives of (mainly men's) struggles against a brutal regime. As such, this book seeks to contribute to a small but growing body of work on gender and everyday life in socialist Romania that goes beyond totalitarian interpretations of state-society relations to analyze the complexities of the socialist project and women's lived experiences of it.[7]

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While I do not regard the former communist government as legitimate, I do regard the memories of those who lived, worked, took holidays, and raised families during the period as legitimate. Thus, I aim to validate and historicize people's experiences while also recognizing that they occurred under a regime that was neither popularly elected nor popularly supported and that committed repressive acts, often of a violent nature, against its people. Weaving women's varied experiences into the broader political and social fabric of Romania, this book also contributes to scholarship on gender, state making, and modernization in the twentieth century. In so doing, it complicates conventional portraits of the socialist state as an all-powerful monolith ruling over an atomized and hapless populace.

A class-based ideology, socialism sought to fashion a new society, economy, and culture through new laws, institutions, and modes of representation. As in other periods of major transformation, women were essential to this process. Indeed, considering that women, the working class, and low-level peasants were among the most disempowered groups under capitalism, they ostensibly had the most to gain from the transition to socialism. Thus, this book illuminates the centrality of gender in the politics and practices of socialist state making, examining how ideas about women and men influenced policymaking and social organization, and how, through both persuasive and coercive means, the state mobilized women for the purpose of socialist modernization. Because this transformation entailed not only the reformulation of gender as a social construct but also women's and men's everyday lives, I analyze how this process shaped people's ideas about womanhood and manhood and how gender served as a lens through which people understood this transformation. Therefore, this book examines women as objects of state policy *and* agents who made choices, albeit under limited and at times highly restrictive circumstances. Yet, rather than viewing women and the state as oppositional forces, I consider how state socialism constrained *and* enabled agency, focusing on "not only what was repressed or prohibited but what was made possible or produced."[8] I do not, however, attempt to answer the long-debated question of whether socialism liberated women. Rather, I analyze how it sought to do so through state policies and programs and how women, in turn, experienced and reflected on these efforts. As such, this book does not offer a definitive narrative of women's lives in socialist Romania but instead seeks to explore the impact of socialist transformation by drawing on multiple stories and perspectives.

Scholars of women in the Eastern Bloc have examined the centrality of gender in state making and socialist modernization, particularly the

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ways these processes shaped women's roles, relationships, and self-identities.[9] For instance, in her study of industrialization in Stalinist Poland, Malgorzata Fidelis analyzes how ideas about gender and the nation influenced labor and family policies, state commitment to gender equality, and women's occupational status. At the same time, Fidelis emphasizes women's agency in challenging state policies and asserting their rights as equal citizens. For the East German case, Donna Harsch similarly examines the interrelationship between work and family, exploring how state neglect of domestic concerns prompted women to lobby the government for policy change, specifically a relaxation in divorce laws, enhanced social welfare benefits, and increased access to consumer goods. Meanwhile, Lynne Haney's analysis of welfare regimes in socialist and postsocialist Hungary illustrates how ideas about gender, family, and need informed state approaches to benefit distribution—and how women strategically drew on their identities as mothers and workers to secure benefits. By analyzing how gender shaped policymaking and how women, in turn, responded to these policies, this body of scholarship illuminates the contradictions and limitations of the socialist project for women as well as its possibilities and opportunities. As a corollary, it explores how state socialism influenced (or not) gender relations in a range of spaces from the workplace to the household.

This book similarly examines gender in its various manifestations—from legislative measures and media depictions to family roles and workplace relations. Like Kathleen Canning, I regard gender as a "category of social analysis that denotes the relational character of social difference" as well as a "symbolic system or as a signifier of relations of power in which men and women are positioned differently."[10] Thus, as employed in this book, gender is both a methodological approach and a subject of study. I consider how gender served as an organizing principle of the state, used by policymakers to restructure various spheres and legitimate the socialist project. For example, in order to rapidly industrialize, the state employed gender-homogenizing strategies, mobilizing both women and men into the labor force. At the same time, the state used gender-differentiating strategies, defining women according to their reproductive capacities, for which they were also instrumentalized, especially after 1966.[11] As a corollary, despite state guarantees of equality between women and men, gender hierarchies and discrimination characterized certain sectors of the labor force. While some women criticized these practices, others ignored them (or were unaffected by them) and embraced the occupational opportunities available to them, regarding work as personally validating

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and fulfilling. Meanwhile, although pronatalist policies sharply curtailed women's bodily freedom, they also enabled women to draw on the officially vaunted role of mother to secure extended maternity leave or take sick leave. This demonstrates that women did not necessarily regard all aspects of socialism as coercive or oppressive, or that they were unable to assert agency. Indeed, women often strategized to secure certain resources and benefits, appealing to the state based on their social identities as workers or mothers.

I also examine how gender shaped people's beliefs, norms, and practices, serving as frames through which they made sense of their lives. Despite the emancipatory message of socialist rhetoric, in practice gender roles were often more rigid than socialist policymakers envisioned. Thus, traditional attitudes and modes of behavior remained powerful, at times working against women's equality. This was especially evident in male-dominated fields where the presence of women executing traditionally masculine jobs disrupted existing work cultures and men's conception of skill. It was also evident in men's reluctance to assist in the domestic sphere.

Women grappled with gender hierarchies and the tension between socialist ideology and practice in varying ways. While some grudgingly resigned themselves to their fates, others challenged their subordination or negotiated with state actors to improve their situation. For instance, women working in male-dominated areas might assert their legal status as "equal socialist workers and citizens" to call out the sexist behaviors of coworkers, while wives referenced slogans of equality between women and men to persuade husbands to assist with household chores. Moreover, in letters to the communist leadership, women mobilized their maternal roles to request larger dwellings for their families. Although women's savvy use of state rhetoric was strategic, intended to improve working and living conditions, it was also rooted in ideas of citizenship, equality, and social justice. Indeed, like Alexi Yurchak, I found that some of the values promoted by the state (e.g. social equality, community-mindedness, selflessness, diligence) resonated with my respondents, regardless of ideological affiliation.[12] Thus, while many individuals were anti-Ceauşescu, especially by the 1980s, they nonetheless identified with certain aspects of socialist rhetoric and policy (peace, public security, education, orderliness).[13]

While this book is fundamentally about women, rather than posit a "shared female experience," I place subjectivity at the heart of my analysis, exploring the wide-ranging meanings that women attributed to their experiences.[14] Thus, I examine women's varied roles and identities (as workers, mothers, wives, daughters, consumers, activists, dis-

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sidents), recognizing that they overlapped and intersected with one another to shape lived experience. I also recognize that their meanings shifted with respect to temporal and contextual factors. Although not a generational study per se, since women from certain age cohorts experienced common historical events and viewed particular periods as life-defining, my analysis, where relevant, generalizes about specific social groups and cohorts.

At the same time, I acknowledge that women did not always understand their experiences as gendered but rather as common to most people living in a one-party state. For example, suffering in a cold apartment due to heat rationing, as one of my respondents stressed, was something that men and women alike endured. Thus, while I believe that gender often *mattered*, I also emphasize cases where, according to my subjects, gender didn't matter. In the end, I did make choices about what issues to focus on, namely youth, work, marriage and the family, motherhood and reproduction, and consumption and leisure; however, I analyze these issues in reference to the meanings that both women and official discourses ascribed to them, recognizing that these meanings changed over time and with respect to context.

As the aforementioned examples illustrate, the interrelationship of not only gender and politics but everyday life and politics is essential for understanding the complexity of life under state socialism. To this end, *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday life history) is a central site of analysis as well as a methodological approach of this book. A slippery concept, an everyday life approach, according to historian Maureen Healy, enables scholars "to write about politics and the workings of power in a given historical context … and emphasize human agency in the process."[15] Thus, everyday life history illuminates personal responses to policymaking and governance; the different ways individuals interpreted and responded to state power, be it through resistance, dissimulation, or mockery, or through toleration, accommodation, or even affirmation.[16] My analysis of individual agency, therefore, goes beyond the resistance-accommodation dichotomy, acknowledging that individuals could hold multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting opinions of the regime.[17] Thus, they might be supportive of the regime's employment policies, while condemning its reproductive policies. Given the reach and invasiveness of the socialist state and its efforts to transform all aspects of life, an analysis of everyday life is not only useful but also necessary for understanding the dynamics of state power—and people's responses to it.

The everyday life approach has been used to great effect by scholars of Nazism and socialism to illuminate how individuals asserted agency

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within a system that undermined personal choice and freedom.[18] Through analyses of state (official) and personal (unofficial) sources, these studies have demonstrated that rather than coercion and repression, these regimes relied on a degree of concession and accommodation.[19] Drawing on letters to government officials and editorials, scholars have analyzed how individuals expressed their approval of, concern about, and resistance to state policies—sometimes using socialist parlance to do so.[20] They have also explored how, through connections and personal networks, people negotiated the system of shortage and privilege, securing promotions, scholarships, larger apartments, and a vast array of items from basic foodstuffs to luxury goods. These insights have been instrumental in challenging totalitarian interpretations of communist systems, which focus on their coercive, violent, and repressive aspects. As used in this book, everyday life considers how ordinary individuals engaged with power, including negotiating a range of different relationships to suit their needs. As such, it offers a nuanced portrait of how people resisted or flouted state policies, "worked" the system, enjoyed state services, or simply muddled through. For example, remunerating Romanian doctors with coveted Kent cigarettes and other "luxury" goods could help ensure better treatment in hospital or secure a longer maternity leave. Such an act, what Alf Lüdtke refers to as *Eigen-sinn* (self will), illuminates individual forms of self-preservation and self-assertion and is particularly useful for understanding operations of power on the everyday level. As employed here, however, *Eigen-sinn* need not involve asserting oneself against the state; rather it might entail asserting oneself against traditional beliefs, in some cases even using official discourse to do so. Accordingly, a woman might emphasize her role as an "equal socialist worker and citizen" as a weapon against prejudice in a male-dominated workspace.

An everyday life approach also offers insight into the private sphere or, more aptly, private life, which, in the socialist context, variously served as a retreat and refuge, a place for entertaining friends and family, a site for informal and illicit exchanges, and a space for opposition and honest living.[21] Both personal and social, private life allowed people to sustain traditions, fashion identities, and escape (or grouse about) the overly politicized public sphere or public life.[22] At the same time, everyday life investigations can shed light on morally questionable and ambiguous practices, offering a deeper understanding of how and why individuals supported, complied with, or simply tolerated communist policies. Seen in this light, falsifying statistics, buttressing the Ceauşescu cult, or turning a blind eye to surveillance

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of friends, neighbors, or coworkers was not necessarily rooted in ideological fidelity to communism, but in the acquisition of basic (or even luxury) goods and services or in the need to protect family members and oneself.[23]

More broadly, explorations of gender and everyday life enhance understandings of the relationship between state and citizen and how politics and ideology were felt by people in their daily lives. Drawing on historian Konrad Jarausch's notion of "welfare dictatorship" and Jan Palmowski's concept of "socialist citizenship," this book complicates conventional Cold War understandings of state-society relations in the Eastern Bloc.[24] In contrast to citizenship in liberal democracies, socialist citizenship was relatively passive: individuals did not genuinely participate in the political process and were prohibited from associating freely, though they did appeal, through letters, protests, and revolts, to the state for improved conditions. While lacking political rights, peoples of the Eastern Bloc did enjoy certain economic and social rights.[25] Although not substitutes for full rights, economic rights, such as guaranteed employment, and social rights, such as universal healthcare, education, and childcare were, for some individuals, as important as—if not more important than—political rights. This was especially the case for women in Romania who were denied a host of political rights during the interwar period.[26] As the country was overwhelmingly agrarian when the communists took power, social entitlements improved the lives of many, often serving as a basis upon which people's understanding of rights developed and their identities were expressed. Indeed, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that people in the region lacked political rights, their identities developed with respect to social and economic rights. This suggests that some individuals regarded certain aspects of socialist rule, specifically its policies, as legitimate.

At the same time, the existence of social entitlements and people's positive identification with them does not override the fact that people lacked autonomy—though it should also be noted that even in liberal democracies autonomy is constrained by race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Nor does it override censorship, barriers to travel, material want, repressive pronatalist policies, or other violations of people's civil and human rights. In sum, a broader conceptualization of citizenship allows for a more complex understanding of the state, not only as an instrument of coercion but also of possibilities. As such, it is particularly useful for understanding people's ambiguous relationship toward socialism, as well as state efforts to secure popular legitimacy."[27]

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The promise of egalitarianism notwithstanding, socialist citizenship, like other types of citizenship, contained hierarchies and exclusions as some people enjoyed more rights and benefits than others.[28] Some of these exclusions were codified in law, while others were de facto; some were political forms of exclusion, others were social. For example, while social mobility was possible, it was often linked to social origin, job type, and political servility rather than merit. This was evident in the privileges enjoyed by the political elite and, to a lesser extent, heavy laborers. Moreover, access to welfare entitlements varied temporally and as a function of status and political expediency. For instance, during the early years of socialist rule, entitlements were used strategically as a form of social leveling and punishment. As such, poor peasants and laborers were the beneficiaries of "affirmative action" policies, with groups deemed essential to socialist modernization, such as heavy industrial laborers, being privileged for food and housing. As a corollary, while there was a good deal of educational mobility in the country, especially for children of workers and peasants, occupational mobility was limited. Meanwhile, homosexuals, those with "unhealthy social origins," such as interwar elites and alleged reactionaries and kulaks (well-off or landowning peasants), faced discrimination or persecution.

That said, because the state was not static and monolithic but a layered entity, composed of multiple institutions and agencies that relied on bureaucrats, journalists, social workers and the police, among others, to interpret, disseminate, and enforce (or not) its policies, socialist rule was by no means a seamless, transparent, and consistent practice. Indeed, given that connections, favoritism, and bribery became endemic to the system, how policies were enforced could vary depending on the situation and persons involved. The discrepancy between citizenship as legislated, implemented, and experienced thus demonstrates that rights—particularly the enjoyment of them—are never certain or guaranteed, but are often contingent on circumstance and personal relationships. Similarly, people's enjoyment and expression of their rights is often contingent on particular conditions.

Analyzing the nexus between gender, citizenship, and everyday life also illuminates the complexities of socialist modernization. As in the West, in Romania modernization (e.g. industrialization, urbanization, social intervention, welfare entitlements, and consumption) shaped various aspects of life, including gender relations, reproduction, culture, education, and public health. Moreover, in both East and West modernization was a process of assessing, categorizing, managing, and regulating society through institutions, laws, and policies.

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hood could be highly rewarding. Still, mothers faced a host of challenges in reconciling the demands of work and family, particularly finding adequate childcare. In response, women devised clever strategies to maximize the time spent with their infants, drawing on maternalist discourse to persuade doctors to extend maternity leave.

In chapter 6, I examine the interplay between consumption, citizenship, and identity, exploring Romania's transformation from postwar austerity in the late 1940s and 1950s to cultural and consumer liberalization in the 1960s and 1970s to the return to austerity in the 1980s. Consumption served as a tool of political legitimacy and social control, a means of highlighting the modernity and seeming progressiveness of the regime and for asserting national autonomy. It was also a constitutive element of identity formation, a medium for constructing and reinforcing social hierarchies, and a central facet of everyday life, which could elicit pleasure but also anxiety. Increased access to consumer goods during the 1960s and 1970s markedly improved the lives of many—and helped garner popular support for the regime. In terms of gender specifically, new models of womanhood, often influenced by Western styles, emerged, and heretofore-personal issues, such as marital relations and sexuality, were featured topics in socialist media. At the same time, the "marketing" of modern fashions and furnishings was accompanied by draconian pronatalist policies, which conflicted with the progressive depictions featured in the magazines.

By the late 1970s, the state reversed consumer policies in an effort to pay off the foreign debt. The result was a desperate and disgruntled population that relied on the black market, connections, and barter as basic survival strategies. Shortage presented particular challenges for women as they struggled to procure infant formula, concoct nourishing and palatable meals, and complete essential tasks, at times without hot water or electricity. Such shortages compounded the stress and indignity women experienced as a result of the criminalization of abortion, which, when considered alongside official rhetoric about women's noble roles as mothers, further underscored the ideological bankruptcy of the regime. Ultimately, increased penury and repression, along with the waning of socialism elsewhere in the Bloc, compelled Romanians to topple the Ceauşescu regime, illustrating the centrality of consumption in regime legitimacy and longevity.

Chapter 7 examines another major transition in twentieth-century Romania: the transition from socialism to pluralism. It traces the lead-up to the revolution of 1989, the ensuing political and social turmoil, and the shift to pluralism. I argue that the postsocialist period, like the socialist period, has been characterized by ambiguity. As such,

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David Kideckel's term "actually existing turbulence" aptly describes the flux and uncertainty that Romanians experienced during the 1990s and early 2000s.[51] In terms of my respondents, while some successfully retooled their skills and integrated into the competitive marketplace, others, due to structural transformations and factors outside of their control, were less successful in this endeavor. Consequently, some women praised the political freedoms and professional opportunities of the post-1989 period, while others were more measured and even critical in their assessments of the past twenty-five years, lamenting the loss of security, validation, and camaraderie they had enjoyed during the socialist period. At the same time, they universally praised the rights they have gained since 1989: freedom of speech, association, and travel, and, crucially for women, reproductive freedom. Indeed, many Romanians have availed themselves of these freedoms, participating in marches and protests and migrating to Western Europe for improved educational and employment opportunities.

Yet, continuities with the past also remain in the form of wide-scale corruption and political graft. Thus, this chapter problematizes triumphalist discourses that emerged after 1989, highlighting the complex effects of political and economic pluralism on Romanians' lives. As a corollary, it challenges the prevailing belief that people's positive recollections of the past are evidence of communist nostalgia, illustrating that, for some, socialism was not simply about security and economic stability but also identity formation and collective belonging. Whatever my respondents' views of the past, I conclude that socialism remains alive in the minds—and in some cases the hearts—of Romanians today, influencing how they make sense of both past and present.

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Notes

1. Maria, interview with author, Braşov, 15 June 2003.
2. For triumphalist narratives on the fall of communism, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); and François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
3. See Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismăneanu, eds., *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000).
4. Scholars of the Eastern Bloc use various terms to describe the regimes and societies they investigate (e.g. socialism, state-socialism, communism, and Communism) and, as of this writing, there is no consensus on what is the most appropriate or accurate term to use. Because party leaders, propagandists, and policymakers in Romania used the term "communist" to refer to the party and "socialist" to refer to the type of governmental system they had created—or were in the process of creating—I have chosen to use these terms as well. Thus, my use of the terms "communist" and "socialist" to refer to one-party rule by the Romanian Communist Party and the economic, social, and cultural system that was implemented by the state between 1947 and 1989 does not reflect a belief that either of these stages were realized. Rather, it reflects the designations employed by leaders and propagandists at the time as well as those used by my respondents.
5. According to this interpretation, communist politics in the East European satellites was orchestrated by the Soviet Union, and a self-interested ruling elite controlled all aspects of life through terror, coercion, and intimidation. For examples of the totalitarian model, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolutions* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); and Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).
6. Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu, "The Cannon of Remembering Romanian Communism: From Autobiographical Recollections to Collective Representations," in *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe,* ed. Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, and Stefan Troebst (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 49.
7. The most comprehensive analysis of gender policy and propaganda in socialist Romania is Luciana M. Jinga, *Gen şi reprezentare în România comunistă, 1944–1989* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2015). Additionally, Gail Kligman's *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) provides an extensive analysis of the policies and practices associated with Ceauşescu's pronatalist program. With respect to women's reflections on their experiences under socialism, a number of memoir collections have been published in Romania over the past decade, most notable among them Zoltán Rostás and Theodora Eliza Văcăresu, *Cealaltă jumătate a istoriei: Femei povestind* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2008), which focuses on the lives of

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rural women, and Radu Pavel Gheo and Dan Lungu, *Tovarăşe de drum: Experienţa feminină în comunism* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2008). For general oral histories of the period, see, for example, Zoltán Rostás and Sorin Stoica, eds., *Istorie la firul ierbii: Documente sociale orale* (Bucharest: Editura Tritonic, 2003); Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită—Istorie povestită: Deportarea în Bărăgan (1951–1956)* (Timişoara: Editura Amarcord, 1997); and *Germanii din Banat prin povestirile lor* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2000). On social and everyday life histories of communism, see Adrian Neculau, ed., *Viaţa cotidiană în comunism* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2004); and Paul Cernat, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir, eds., *Explorări în comunismul românesc,* vols. 1, 2, and 3 (Iaşi: Polirom, 2004, 2005, and 2008).

8. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 22.
9. For the Soviet Union, see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Wendy Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922–1953* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology, 1910–1939* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); Melanie Ilić ed., *Women in the Stalin Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); and Melanie Ilić, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds., *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). For Eastern Europe, see Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*; Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Shana Penn and Jill Massino, eds., *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); Catherine Baker, ed., *Gender in Twentieth-Century Europe and the USSR* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Joanna Goven, "Gender and Modernism in a Stalinist State," *Social Politics* 9, no. 1 (2002): 3–28.
10. Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.
11. The conceptualization of gender-homogenizing and gender-differentiating strategies is taken from Goven, "Gender and Modernism."
12. Alexi Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.
13. State promotion of such issues, argues Thomas Lindenberger, provided a "tacit consensus" between the rulers and the ruled. See Thomas Lindenberger, "Tacit Minimal Consensus: The Always Precarious East German Dictatorship," in *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fas-*

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cism, Nazism, Communism, ed. Paul Corner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 208–222. Also see Ulf Brunnbauer, *Die sozialistische Lebensweise: Ideologie, Gesellschaft, Familie und Politik in Bulgarien (1944–1989)* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).

14. In this capacity, I am influenced by oral historians of women and gender. See, for example, Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
15. See Maria Bucur, Rayna Gavrilova, Wendy Goldman, Maureen Healy, Kate Lebow, and Mark Pittaway, "Six Historians in Search of Alltagsgeschichte," in *Aspasia: International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 3 (2008): 189–212.
16. On making do, See Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
17. On the importance of historicizing the various ways individuals expressed agency under socialism see Jan Plamper, "Beyond Binaries: Popular Opinion in Stalinism," in *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes,* 65–80.
18. See Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconnecting Historical Experience and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford, 1999); Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Herrschaft und Eigen-sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999); and Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
19. See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain;* Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Konrad Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999); Mark Pittaway, *The Workers' State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); and Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
20. See Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (1966): 78–105; Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Martin K. Dimitrov, "What the Party Wanted to Know: Citizen Complaints as a 'Barometer of Public Opinion' in Communist Bulgaria," *East European Politics and Societies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 271–295. Mioara Anton and Laurenţiu Constantiniu, ed., *Guvernaţi şi Guvernanţi: Scrisori către putere, 1945–1965* (Bucharest: IICCMER, 2013); Mioara Anton *"Ceauşescu şi poporul!" Scrisori către "iubitul conducător" (1965–1989)* (Târgovişte: Cetatea de Scaun, 2016); and Manuela Marin, *Între prezent şi trecut: cultul personalităţii lui Nicolae Ceauşescu şi opinia publica româneasca* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura MEGA, 2014).

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21. See Betts, *Within Walls*.
22. By employing the terms private sphere/private life and public sphere/public life, I am not claiming that these were oppositional spaces or that one existed outside the other. Indeed, I fully recognize that private life was decisively compromised within the socialist context, particularly in Romania, and that there was a good deal of fluidity between the two. At the same time, people managed to find spaces (both physical and mental) where they could take refuge from the state and engage in pursuits that were outside of its purview.
23. On definitions of complicity under socialism, see Kligman, *Politics of Duplicity,* 14–15.
24. For a discussion of socialist citizenship in the GDR, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship," in *Dictatorship as Experience,* 47–72; and Jan Palmowski, "Citizenship, Identity, and Community in the German Democratic Republic," in *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany,* ed. Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008): 73–94.
25. On different types of citizenship in the modern state, see T. H. Marshall's classic, *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development* (New York: Doubleday, 1964).
26. On women and citizenship in Romania, see Enikő Magyari-Vincze, "Romanian Gender Regimes and Women's Citizenship," in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Jasmina Lukić, Joanna Regulska, and Darja Zaviršek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 26.
27. On legitimacy as a frame for analyzing socialist state-building efforts and the relationship between the regime and society in Hungary, see Pittaway, *The Workers' State,* 3–6.
28. On the exclusivity of socialist citizenship, see Golfo Alexopoulos, "Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 3 (2006): 487–528.
29. Lynne Haney refers to these as "architectures of need." Haney, *Inventing the Needy,* 7.
30. James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 90–91.
31. On socialist modernity, see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain;* Jarausch, "Care and Coercion"; and Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008). On alternative modernity, see David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
32. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (1992), 21.
33. On the use of tradition for socialist purposes see Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 9–10.

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34. Jelena Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans: A History of World War II Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 75.
35. On the gendered dimensions and implications of nationalist discourse in socialist Romania, see Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), in particular chapter three, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe."
36. See Marcin Kula, "Poland: The Silence of Those Deprived of Voice," in *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes,* 153.
37. See, for example, Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routlege, 1995).
38. The Communist Party of Romania (PCdR), changed its name to the Romanian Workers Party (Partidul Muncitoresc Român; PMR) in 1948. In order to emphasize the historical continuity with the prewar, revolutionary movement, Ceauşescu changed its name back to the Communist Party of Romania in 1965.
39. See Betts, *Within Walls,* for an analysis of *Eingaben* in the GDR. In this respect, Romania was not a "participatory dictatorship" in the sense that the GDR was. See Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East Germany from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 11–12. The letters were received and archived in the Department of Letters and Audiences, which was a section within the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Individuals typically appealed to high-ranking leaders at the Central Committee in Bucharest as a last resort, after having unsuccessfully sought redress of an issue through the Party at the local or regional level.
40. Although listening to Radio Free Europe broadcasts was illegal in Romania, its audience grew considerably under Ceauşescu, and by the final decade of communist rule most of the population—including members of the *miliţia* and Securitate—tuned in. During the 1980s, prime listening time was between 6pm and 11pm. See Marin, *Între prezent şi trecut.*
41. Respondents were identified through friends, colleagues, and the snowball method, which, while not scientific, helps foster trust since it involves an intermediary who is familiar with researcher and subject. All interviews were conducted in Romanian and digitally recorded and typically occurred in the respondents' homes. In the spring and summer of 2003, three sociology students from the University of Transylvania—Ioana Manoliu, Anca Coman, and Ionuţ Iuria—conducted twenty-five interviews, while I conducted fifty interviews. Meanwhile, I conducted all interviews in 2009 and 2012.
42. While my respondents were born between 1924 and 1972, most were born in the 1940s and 1950s.
43. See Luisa Passerini, ed., *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories: Volume I: Memory and Totalitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1992); and Rubie Watson, ed., *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press,

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1994). For more general scholarship on oral history and agency, see Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Berger and Patai, *Women's Words;* and Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991).

44. For a discussion of how official culture influenced people's understanding of state and society in socialist Romania, see the introduction in Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949–1962* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
45. See Daniela Koleva, ed., *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012).
46. Like Vladimir Tismăneanu, I agree that from a political and economic perspective both Dej and Ceauşescu were committed Stalinists—albeit to differing degrees. However, because neither employed the same brutal and arbitrary methods of Stalin, the term neo-Stalinist or national Stalinist is more appropriate for the Romanian context. See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
47. Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
48. The heteronormativity of socialist discourse and policy, state criminalization of homosexuality, and homophobic tendencies within Romanian society at large makes this a challenging topic. As such, Irina Costache's "Archiving Desire: Materiality, Sexuality, and the Secret Police in Romanian State Socialism (PhD diss., Central European University, 2014) is an impressive and welcome critical analysis of LGBT identities and practices in socialist Romania.
49. Studies of rural families and folklore reveal that domestic violence was commonplace and more or less accepted, both in pre-communist and communist Romania, by rural women as a part of being married, see Gail Kligman, *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 132.
50. See Maria Bucur, "Gendering Dissent: Of Bodies and Minds, Survival and Opposition under Communism," in *Beyond Little Vera: Women's Bodies, Women's Welfare in Russia and Central/Eastern Europe,* ed. Angela Brintlinger and Natasha Kolchevska, *Ohio Slavic Papers,* vol. 7 (2008): 9–26.
51. As quoted in Daphne Berdahl, "Introduction: An Anthropology of Postsocialism," in *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union,* ed. Daphne Berdahl, Matti Bunzl, and Martha Lampland (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 2.

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