

CROSSINGS AND DWELLINGS, OR THE
IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE BLACK BOX:
THE ROMANIA-YUGOSLAVIA BORDER'S CLOSINGS
AND OPENINGS, 1940's TO 1980's

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CONTENTS

<u>1.</u> ABSTRACT	3
<u>2.</u> DECLARATION	4
<u>3.</u> COPYRIGHT STATEMENT	5
<u>4.</u> ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
<u>5.</u> THESIS OUTLINE	7
<u>6.</u> INTRODUCTION	8
<u>7.</u> RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES	13
<u>8.</u> BORDERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT	15
<u>8.1.</u> BORDERS	15
<u>8.2.</u> STATE	22
<u>8.3.</u> QUESTIONS OF BECOMING: A FURTHER EMPHASIS ON BORDERS	29
<u>8.4.</u> BORDER BECOMING AND THE BLACK BOX	41
<u>9.</u> DATA DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY: FIELDWORK, FICTION AND ETHNOGRAPHY	47
<u>10.</u> THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE BORDER	56
<u>10.1.</u> THREE FICTION NOVELS IN CONTEXT	56
<u>10.2.</u> CLOSING THE BORDER-BLACK BOX	64
<u>10.2.1.</u> Undeva pe Dunăre (Somewhere at the Danube)	64
<u>10.2.2.</u> La borna 203 (At the landmark 203)	72
<u>10.3.</u> OPENING THE BORDER-BLACK BOX?	81
<u>10.3.1.</u> Iluzia (The Illusion)	81
<u>10.4.</u> THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF THE BORDER-BLACK BOX	90
<u>10.4.1.</u> Building a dam on the Danube	92
<u>10.4.2.</u> Before the dam	93
<u>10.4.3.</u> After the dam	103
<u>10.4.4.</u> Dwelling and crossing	111
<u>10.4.5.</u> Crossing, in practice and fantasy	122
<u>11.</u> CONCLUSIONS	128
<u>12.</u> BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

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1. ABSTRACT

The Cold War border regimes between Romania and Yugoslavia were not only aimed at securitising the Romanian territory from any Western infiltrations, but also at actively imposing the party state, in physical and ideological form, antagonising and settling consensus among groups and individuals within the Romanian border area. The early Stalinist border regime established a harsh defence apparatus oriented both towards and beyond the country's territory, with multiple possibilities of action and subjection. In contrast with developments that led to the internalisation of a growing everyday feeling of the state and border's illegitimacy, the party's apparatus of culture produced visions of consensus, stability, and control at the frontier, in the context of an intense class struggle strengthened by alliances between borderlanders, party representatives, and the military.

By analysing three fiction novels – *La borna 203*, *Undeva pe Dunăre* (Alexandru Jar) and *Iluzia* (Ion Lotreanu) – the thesis explores different constructions (proletcult/socialist realist and modernist) of the frontier between Romania and Yugoslavia in two periods. The first period refers to the Romanian sovietisation and break-up of relations with Yugoslavia, as of the 1950's. The second period concerns the de-sovietisation of the 1960's and the re-enactment of good relations with Yugoslavia. Using actor network theory, as well as other theoretical inputs, the thesis follows the border along processes that attempt to objectify and 'close' it into a black box. Also, it points out the difficulty of representing the border and describes the attempts of 'opening' it. In the final part of the ethnographic chapter, the border is traced and analysed through processes that produce what I call here practices and imaginations of 'dwelling' and 'crossing', and their consequences for the border-entity, or actor-network. This final part, that uses interviews and fieldnotes collected during fieldwork on the border, brings us to the intrigue of the impossibility of closing the black box of the border. Along with the fiction novels that cover the early periods of 1950's and 1960's, the final ethnographic part, which is formed by retrospective narratives, mixes various spatiotemporal references, from the 1960's to 1989 and after.

The thesis concentrates on a few aspects of border-making processes: the 'utopian' constructions of cross-border flows and control during the early period of absolute legal restrictions on crossing and the relations which border guards developed with local populations in their efforts to defend the 'Motherland'. In addition, by using fieldwork experience and certain stories from fiction novels, the thesis discusses dwelling and crossing as intersubjective engagements with cross-border flows and control with the mediation of an important event that generated a principal actant within the border-network – the construction of the Iron Gates dam. Combining fieldwork material and fiction works into an ethnographic piece, the thesis approaches its objects creatively and seeks to avoid the fixity and limitations of the metanarratives that bias the study of early expansion of the Romanian Workers' Party, and socialism, in general. Also, the thesis wants to be a contribution to the anthropological study of borders. In doing so, it advances the possibility of treating borders as becoming, never-quite-fixed entities, or actor networks, which can support dereifying frontiers as objects of inquiry and avoid the overemphasis on notions of culture, state, and territory which are common references in the existing social sciences literature and sometimes pose the risk of simplifying and reifying complex social relations and political processes.

2. DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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5. THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is organised in four main chapters, an introduction, a section of discussion and conclusions. The main chapters are related to research questions, literature review, a discussion on data and methodology, and the ethnographic parts, including analysis and interpretation.

The introduction sets the scene for the rest of the thesis. It is dedicated to a discussion of what this thesis is and what it is not about. The introduction is also the place for offering an historical context of the border, especially referring to the 1950's and 1960's, as selected from various accounts.

Based on the intrigue outlined in the introduction, the research questions chapter narrows down the research object by formulating a few empirical questions, as well as more theoretical and analytical objectives that were of interest in the write-up of this thesis. Questions and objectives are followed throughout the thesis and work as a filtering device for the presentation of the next chapter – literature review.

The literature review tries to offer a detailed scholarly (anthropological) account on borders. Besides describing the state of the art in this field of studies, in relation to other analytical objects connected to borders (such as 'the state'), the chapter is also an assessment of the described literature. It evaluates the theoretical possibilities of the anthropology of borders, in close connection with the research objectives. The chapter forms an interpretive framework for the ethnographic part of the thesis, where several bodies of scholarly work, including actor-network theory and work on the 'black box' concept.

The next chapter sets out a methodology for the thesis. The approach to ethnography my work engages with is also provided. In here, the relation between ethnography, fieldwork and popular fiction is a major focus, while details of the fieldwork conducted by the author at the border are also provided.

The main chapter of the thesis is ethnographic – divided into three main subchapters. The first is the description of context in which the selected literary works were produced. The second is an interpretation of border making processes through two works of fiction belonging to the proletcult literary genre as developed on the Romanian cultural scene in the 1950's: *Undeva pe Dunăre* (Somewhere at the Danube) and *La borna 203* (At landmark 203), both by

Alexandru Jar. The third subchapter is dedicated to an analysis of another fiction novel – *Iluzia* (The Illusion), by Ion Lotreanu – belonging to the Romanian modernist literary genre, a book published in 1981, narrating border stories of an autobiographic character, set in late 1950's and early 1960's. The fourth part of the ethnography chapter is based on a selection of the author's fieldwork material, adding up other notions and keys of interpretation to the questions of dwelling, crossing, control and surveillance opened by the fiction novels previously examined.

The final part represents a summary of findings and a discussion of border remaking processes in connection to the nature of data and overall approach.

6. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of World War II, virtually closed borders were the foremost phenomenon to define what was referred to as the Cold War. The Berlin Wall and similar border fences were built all over the world and materialised an intense ideological and political struggle. Today, such border fences are still in place. United States–Mexico, China-Tibet, North-South Korea, Spain-Morocco, and Palestinian Occupied Territories-Israel: all of those name zones of harsh militarised surveillance and control of population movement. As the Cold War ended, the drive for security has largely been transferred from ex-socialist states to the capitalist core and it is still linked to South-North, East-West migrations, ideas about world-wide terrorism etc. Yet, the Cold war frontiers, and especially the ways those borders were enforced, made and remade, remain largely undocumented by social science in general, and anthropology in particular.

Although a thriving literature related to the pre-1989 borders – historical, autobiographical, popular fiction, political debate, ideological positions – has been spreading fast after 1989, few systematic scholarly accounts tried to set out an analysis beyond established tenets and metanarratives in fashion. What are these narratives about? At the EU and national members' level in the last 10 years, a strong discourse of 'condemnation of communism' has been developed, paralleled by lustration laws and new regulations for the circulation of political elites. All these were being aimed at recovering the memory of the victims of the communist national regimes in place until 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe

from a conservative and right-wing point of view. In Romania, a Center for the Investigation of the Communism's Crimes has been set up. According to the goals of the Center, as quoted from its webpage:

‘CICCR aims at conducting activities that will lead to the identification of those acts of infringement against human rights in communist Romania and to a different dynamism of institutional politics aimed at a real conviction of the abuses and crimes perpetrated on behalf of the communist regime in Romania; the Center is also committed to carry out investigations to produce data in relation to crimes and abuses by the communist regime for institutions and for the larger public (...).’¹

In Romania there has also been a public condemnation of communism, initiated by the Presidency. President Băsescu appeared in front of Parliament and made the declaration in December 2006. The ‘moral’ condemnation of communism has been backed by the so-called ‘Tismăneanu Report’ – a 600-page opus of official papers, archives and studies conducted by historians and sociologists, all arguing for a single truth referring to the period between 1947 and 1989, and communicating an unidirectional message – the ‘satanic’ character of communism (Tismăneanu 2006). The historical metanarrative imposed over the last half decade and voiced by the president has been hugely influential and attracted unprecedented popularity for President Băsescu among intellectuals. This thesis takes this well-established recuperationist discourse as its point of departure.

When such discourses become so powerful and influential, analyses and interpretations of Cold War, including various aspects of everyday life, become necessarily limited at the expense of a creative and analytical social science that possesses all the necessary instruments to investigate the processes in question. My argument is that the multiplication of data sources, the focus on particular objects of analysis – such as the borders of the Cold War – and the critical examination of documents and discursive/political works produced both before and after 1989 allows a critical social inquiry able to reveal the actors’ different feelings, dispositions, behaviours and alternatives of understanding and interpretation, all placed in their particular spatiotemporal contexts. In particular, this thesis explores the possibilities of reinterpretation and the alternative analysis of the border between Romania and Yugoslavia.

¹ <http://www.condamnareacomunismului.ro/DespreCICCR/Obiective.aspx>, the author’s translation.

Where do we find instances of the recuperationist metanarrative in relation to this border? A series of documentary, journalistic, autobiographical and historical works has been published in recent years, almost all exclusively dealing with the stories of illegal flights across the border into Serbia, until 1989. Among these works, there were *Mormintele tac* (Graves are quiet) by Johann Steiner and Doina Magheți (2009), *Frontieriștii* (The Frontierists) by Brîndușa Armanca (2011), *Memoriile unui 'frontierist'* (Autobiography of a frontierist) by John Pîrva (2011), *Trei frontiere* (Three frontiers) by Laurian Lodoabă (2007). Prior to these works, in 2005, *Jurnalul Național*, a Bucharest-based newspaper, hosted a series of reportages entitled 'Cazanele'² morții ('Cauldrons' of death) introducing various stories of people who fled illegally across the border before 1989. In addition to these, various works have approached the issue of deportations from the border area during the 1950's. Among these works, there were: *Anno Domini 1951* by Tatiana Maria and Cernicova Dincă (2003), *Deportații via dolorosa – 18 iunie 1951* (The deported via dolorosa – June 18, 1951) by Radu Bercea and Nicolae Ianăși (2010), *Sârbii din România în Golgota Bărăganului* (Romanian Serbs in the Golgotha of Bărăgan) by Miodrag Milin and Ljubomir Stepanov (2003), *Rusalii '51: Fragmente din deportarea în Bărăgan* (Pentecost '51: Fragments from deportations to Bărăgan) by Viorel Marineasa and Daniel Vighi (1994), *Istorie trăită, istorie povestită: deportarea în Bărăgan, 1951-1956* (Lived history, narrated history: deportation to Bărăgan, 1951-1956) by Smaranda Vultur (1997), *Deportații în Bărăgan 1951-1956* (The deported to Bărăgan 1951-1956) by Silviu Sarafolean (2001). Another dominant series of writing related to the Romania-Yugoslavia border is formed by the writings about Ada-Kaleh – the flooded Danube island³: *Viața și opera insulei Ada-Kaleh* (Life and work of Ada-Kaleh island) by Ileana Roman (2005) and a special issue of *Apollodor* review (2004)⁴.

These publications provide the reader with similar statements about the border situation in different contexts and periods, in the sense of reiterating efforts of recovering the memory of a traumatic border and its regime of repression. They also constitute very useful

² 'Cazane' (Cauldrons) comes from a popular name of various mountainous and rocky places along the Danube where the river bed is narrow and the water flows faster. As the places were difficult to control and maintain under permanent observation by border guards, the Cazane were frequently used by 'frontierists' to flee to Yugoslavia by water.

³ Also about Ada-Kaleh and other areas of the river-border with Yugoslavia are two works by sociologist Carmen Bulzan (2007, 2008).

⁴ A similar issue of *Apollodor* has been dedicated to the memory of the old Orșova town which was, similar to Ada-Kaleh, flooded during the works at the Iron Gates dam built on the Danube.

material for a critical inquiry of the border. While such writings have been very common lately, a large body of ‘border literature’ – history, journalism, propaganda, popular fiction – produced before 1989 has been silenced on the pretext of being a reflection and object of falsehood and mystification characteristic to cultural production under communism⁵. In the approach I advocate here, this attitude is considered counterproductive. My thesis argues that there is much to discover about the border, and border-(re)making processes by considering such works as valid ethnographic material. By using these works, scholars and writers of the border will be able to depart from the ‘tyranny’ of the ‘anti-communist’ discourse and enrich the understanding of the border through various aspects which are very difficult to study directly through ethnographic fieldwork or archival research at the moment when they were produced.

It is here that the intended contribution of this thesis lies. The objective of an approach based on combining primary ethnographic data collected through fieldwork with fragments and reinterpretations of pre-1989 popular fiction is (1) to construct creative theories of Cold War borders and border processes, and (2) to depart from the cultural and political discourses which bias the scholarly work in the field.

Through analysis and interpretation of ethnographic-cum-fiction material, the thesis will argue for considering state-to-state border spaces as major actor-networks in national and global/regional politics. That is to say that the border was not only enacted from ‘outside’, by external actors, but was an important network of actants⁶ itself, peculiar in its regimes of security, control, dwelling, and crossing. Yet, the coherence and consensus on the actions and influences of the border, and the border-making processes themselves are questionable and subject to inquiry – which is the object of attention in this thesis. The Cold War Romania-Yugoslavia border, apparently a marginal and small-area geographical site, is presented

⁵ Among pre-1989 works of fiction detailing the Romania-Yugoslavia border, there could be mentioned (besides the three novels considered for ethnographic construction in this thesis): *Elvira și locotenentul* (Elvira and the lieutenant), by Ion Lotreanu (1978), *Între două toamne* (Between two falls), by Gheorghe Văduva (1982), *Avanposturile datoriei* (Footholds of duty), by Grigore Stănescu (1987), *Porțile luminii* (Gates of light), by Ion Grasu (2002), *Drumul bărbaților* (The men’s road), by Florian Copcea (1985), *Vărsătorul de piatră* (Aquarius of stone), by Ileana Roman (1980), *Demiurgii* (Demiurges), by Florian Copcea (2002), *Îmblânzirea Dunării: Porțile de Fier I 1964-1972: mărturiile vremii* (Taming the Danube: Iron Gates I 1964-1972: witnesses of the time), by Dan Ion Predoiu (2000).

⁶ The term ‘actant’, consistently used throughout the thesis, is meant to provide an interpretation of border processes in the framework of the actor-network theory. More details about the usage of ANT in my thesis are offered in the forthcoming chapters.

ethnographically as an encapsulation of central politics, activity, process, and subjectivity – all contributing greatly to grand political projects in various power regimes.

The thesis will first approach the post-World War II situation in which the Romania-Yugoslavia border was physically closed and unavailable to legal border crossings of any kinds, as Yugoslavia, with its revisionist Tito regime, neighbored with ‘Soviet’ Romania. Between 1949 and early 1970’s, there were virtually no border crossings, except a very small number authorised for special purposes. Even after the tension between the two states cooled down, the restrictive border regimes were marked by a long-lasting inertia. However, the popular fiction analysed here is a proof of the lively space of the border, in terms of intense political life, everyday questions of dwelling, crossing and transformation. The thesis goes further including narratives and recollections of my informants, gathered during fieldwork in 2009-2010. References to the border as a spacetime and landscape for dwelling and crossing, and opportunities for various modes of subjection were often present in my interactions with the borderlanders, especially with those who were young adults or children back then, in the 1960’s or 1970’s. Discourses of such kind are paradoxical and ambivalent, like the border itself – some are dominated by nostalgic recollections of an almost mythical, purely natural past, while others emphasise, from time to time, various experiences of persecution and intrusion by the state and party in their life, which restricted their life at the border. As crossing was legally allowed upon the Iron Gates dam opening in 1972, the border as an actor network and notions of politics it created have been changing. Different layers and arenas of politics have penetrated subjectivities of borderlanders since the end of World War II, until 1989. Actions, feelings, emotions, and affects – fantasised, internalised, or realised in the borderlanders’ everyday life at the border have been changing constantly, although the power regime seemed to stay the same. Against discourses that describe the ‘communist’ regimes as monolithic, monotonous, resistant to change, my thesis investigates tensions, contradictions and multiplicity that formed the base of such regimes at the border. The sources of subjectivation in relation to the border transformed throughout the period, while the border did not stay the same. It was a space of becoming, as I argue elsewhere (Radu 2010). The period this thesis addresses was characterised by harsh restrictions and unprecedented surveillance. For the first time politicised and militarised to a significant, even excessive degree, the border appeared then as a site relevant not only for the geographical area in question, but also for the

whole Romanian ‘territory’ and politics, both nation- and region-wide. Therefore, the thesis will engage with border processes in a period of ‘absolute’ physical closure. In parallel, the degree to which the border became ‘closed’ or ‘opened’ as an object of knowledge and experience is another matter of discussion engaged in the thesis. From this point of view, the concept of black box from actor-network theory is extensively used here.

Balibar (2002) notes for the Schengen area that borders are no longer the margins of the political, but ‘have indeed become (...) things within the space of the political itself’ (p. 92). My thesis takes up this suggestion and explores it in a case of attempts at ‘extreme’, physical border closure. The Romania-Yugoslavia border was autonomous in many respects, but it was also politics itself, the centre that elaborated and emanated politics for the inland, shaping party, state, and socialist subjects, in general. The border produced politics through various mechanisms: anti-Yugoslavian, Soviet propaganda plus a wired fence on the Romanian side, large actions of dispossession, anti-crossing, deportations in the 1950’s, and population displacements in the 1960’s generated by the construction of the Iron Gates dam. Although crossing remained restricted, the construction of the dam implied tremendous local dynamics (massive in-migration from other parts of Romania, expansion of the local labour market, industrialisation etc.) and transformations in the regionalisation of the area.

To sum up, the thesis aims to explore a number of things about borders. First, *physical closure or opening does not necessarily reflect stasis or dynamism of cross-border flows, and is not juxtaposed to closure or opening of the border as an object of experience and knowledge*. The border appears here as a case against analytical isolation and marginalisation, representing instead centrality, a multitude of spacetimes and activities from which politics is elaborated. The border, in its making, is also a mechanism of producing subjects and categories of subjects. *The Romania-Yugoslavia border, although described as a harsh imposition of the Cold War, was in fact a permanent negotiation and instantiation of diversity and difference throughout socialism.*

7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Along with physical closures or openings, the border is examined here in its closing and opening as an object of knowledge in its making. The main objective of the analysis is *to*

see whether the materialities of border regimes, in their expressions of dwelling and crossing do effect the capacity of the border to become a clearly defined object, legible and intelligible – a black box, in the vocabulary of actor-network theory. The becoming of a border into an object, legible and intelligible, presumably produces considerable degrees of consensus, knowledge, and order. Actor-network theory (ANT) examines the conditions of such consensus. In other words, ANT is interested to unpack relations between persons, objects and notions, and the conditions in which these relations can act towards the simplification of social life. A black box is any network, or actant, that reaches the point at which it is taken for granted, judged by input or output only. Is that the case of the Romania-Yugoslavia border in the post-war situation and after? As Law (1999) put it:

‘ANT tells that entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relation with other entities. (...) They are performed in, by, and through those relations. A consequence is that everything is uncertain and reversible, at least in principle.’ (p. 3-4)

Accordingly, this thesis starts from two assumptions. First, various discourses established before and after 1989, as well as various processes that occurred at the border over the past decades attempted to objectify the frontier. Second, that the social reality was much more complex than the objectifying material suggested. Therefore, there were permanent reversibilities, uncertainties, and mutual exchanges between border, borderlanders, and other actants, human and non-human, including people who had not lived in the area permanently, but interacted with it in one way or another. In this context, it is important to understand to what degree these processes effected the objectification of the border and its becoming as an autonomous entity.

Some borders, anthropologists argue (Donnan, Wilson 2010), are troubled areas of permanent tension largely maintained by the perceived threat of cross-border mobility. Are there any other aspects that can keep the levels of tension and conflict high at the border? The examination of the black box aspect, for the objectification of the border, is connected to my assumption that the Romania-Yugoslavia frontier can be considered a becoming entity, an actor network with a powerful capacity of producing politics at regional and local levels, including subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. Therefore, the thesis tries to find answers to a series of questions directly linked to the claims above.

How was the Romania-Yugoslavia border made into a legible and intelligible object, if it ever was? Here there is an important aspect that brings together dimensions of absence and presence, order and disorder, known and unknown, representable and unrepresentable. Are there any things about the border that simply cannot be ‘explicated’ by the actors involved? The absent, unknown, unrepresentable, and disorder can affect the border object and render it impossible for it to become a black box. Conversely, if there is consensus about the border and its multiple facets and aspects among the actors related to it, there is an opportunity for ‘closure’, and for the border to become a black box.

Was the border an autonomous, self-producing space of politics in the period of reference? What were the processes and actors through which the border came to be an entity itself? How was the border entity dismantled, by whom and by which processes? The problematique uncovered by the questions and objectives stated above can be headed by the following: Do we know what a state-to-state border is? Can we know what such a border is? If yes, in what conditions is that knowledge possible? In what conditions can that knowledge become impossible?

8. BORDERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

8.1. BORDERS

Borders have generally received much attention from social disciplines, from politics to geography, and from economics to history. Yet, I intend to see how borders have recently been constructed as anthropological objects of inquiry, without detailing other significant approaches. Border ethnographies take different angles. They focus on the people living on borders (e.g. Cole, Wolf 1974; Berdahl 1999; Sahlins 1991, 1998; Douglass 1998; Driessen 1992; Cohen 1972; Ballinger 2003; Green 2005), concentrate on people moving across borders more or less voluntary (e.g. Kearney 1998; Behar 2003; Ballinger 2003; Green 2005; Konstantinov 1996; Konstantinov et al. 1998; Thuen 1999), or show how borders can be

conceived of as more or less powerful presences of the state (e.g. Sahlins 1998; Cole, Wolf 1974; Heyman 1995; Chalfin 2006). Either through strong, authoritative power (e.g. Heyman 1995; Driessen 1998), or through more diffuse, soft power (e.g. Green 2005), the state and the political in general seem to be convenient analytical angles from which anthropologists look at the borders between states.

From a different angle, ethnographies of borders indicate how anthropologists have conceived of borders' forms and processes, and how they have aimed to establish particular authoritative academic discourses about borders. Two broad tendencies seem to run through such anthropological work, although they can by no means be seen as mutually exclusive. One can be approximated as 'poststructuralist', while others are critiques of poststructuralist scholarship from a 'materialist' background. Significantly for my thesis, these approaches reflect tendencies to see borders as relational constructs bridging populations, economies, politics, as well as views of borders as classificatory devices, separating, rather than establishing relations (Green 2008).

A clear indication of a poststructuralist current in the anthropology of borders is the emergence in the last decades of a debate around concepts of culture and place (Gupta, Ferguson 1992). With reference to that, Heyman (1994) noticed the emergence of a discourse about borders that emphasised the fluid and deterritorialised aspect of culture. Heyman termed this preoccupation with borders as the 'border image approach,' whereas Alvarez (1995) wrote about it as of an 'a-literalist' approach. This started with the contestation of the homogeneity of culture, which was already present in anthropology earlier, but which acquired much more visibility later in the 1980's when anthropologists addressed cultures as incomplete and contradictory constructs (Rosaldo 1988; Heyman 1994). Furthermore, instead of seeing cultures as isolated and ahistorical monoliths, anthropologists tried to consider them more processually, in a way in which 'culture' paralleled 'society,' defined as a dense web of diverse social relations. The 'border' thus became a rich metaphor to account for everything. Within what apparently can be a bounded culture, Rosaldo (1988) argues, many boundaries might in fact emerge from the simple contestation of the boundedness of that culture. As borders can exist everywhere in the social space of what is taken to be 'culture,' people living on these edges of the social and cultural present paradigmatic instances of complexity, in cultural terms. These spaces, which anthropology increasingly started to refer as to

'boundaries', 'borders', 'borderlands', 'frontiers', came to be positioned as containers of hybridisation and interstitiality (Heyman 1994).

The paradigmatic case of this approach which indicates the use of a general concept of border and a very specific geographical location is the US-Mexico border, long represented by now as a space for hybridisation. Heyman (1994) even argues that the US-Mexico border became a strange locus of postmodernist anthropology for the imprecise experimentation of abstract notions and metaphorical language (in which the word 'border' was essential) that can practically designate any other social processes occurring around the globe. A typical example which makes the US-Mexico border a kind of parameter for global struggles for identity and capital comes from Alvarez (1995) who speaks of a growing 'borderlands genre'. The most challenging assumption of this genre is that a focus on the borderland allows the anthropologist to reconceptualise notions of culture and community, and their embeddedness in particular places. The general argument that has arisen is that culture is significantly disconnected from place, that cultural (in)coherence is not geographically bounded, but rather transnationally dispersed (up and down the border) along with sets of very heterogeneous social relations. Interestingly, the postmodernist anthropologists who rallied to this borderlands genre were paralleled by numerous postmodernist writers born and grown up in the Mexico-US borderland. Among these, Anzaldua (1992) was one of the most prominent authors who depicted the borderlands in both prose and poetry underlining the immense metaphorical and a-literal potential of the literal border. She, as well as other writers, covered the border in terms of gender, subjectivity, class, race and so on.

An interesting analysis of borders comes from a completely different area of the world, usually known in the Western imaginary as 'the Balkans.' Green (2005) has shown that the Balkans were usually constructed in both academic and political discourses more generally as marginal place, as a literal and a-literal border. Within that area, the author has focused on the Greek-Albanian border known as Pogoni. Green cautions against the danger of simply taking over the discourse of marginality arising from her ethnographic material. This would reproduce a hegemonic discourse about the marginality of the area, which also seems to flourish in the (anthropological and other) discourses about the Mexico-US border. If the border appears to be marginal from the polity's viewpoint, as well as from the point of view of the identities and expected hybrids, then the Greek-Albanian border was described a bit

differently, as straddled between various areas of marginality in which local discourses about movement were crucial. Instead of seeing the border as a margin, as a simple line dividing populations, cultures, territories, or polities, Green presents an alternative view on marginality in terms of relatedness, circulation, and areas of contact.

Anthropological studies that approach borders a-literally, emerging in congruence with the postmodern turn in the discipline, have also been criticized, particularly ethnographically. One of these ethnographic critiques of the border image, or the a-literalist perspective on borders came from Berdahl (1999). Her ethnography was based on the merging of the two Germanies after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. She showed that, while the literal border between East and West, socialism and capitalism, respectively, disappeared, the a-literal border still existed in people's everyday practices of coping with the changes. In fact, the dismantling of a very hard, objectified border (visibly rendered as a border fence) did not lead to the fluidity of identities living on both sides of the border. Rather, it produced various everyday practices through which people resisted capitalism and their inclusion into the unified German nation-state. This ethnographic contestation of the border image gives way to important theoretical considerations based on a border context different from the Mexico-US border. A similar point is also made by Pelkmans (2006) on the Georgian-Russian border.

If Berdahl (1999) discusses the case of a border embedded in a repressive socialist regime that turns into a paradoxical post-socialist social space, Ballinger (2003) addresses a somewhat similar situation in which transformations from above have occurred in a relatively long history. She looks at the subjective histories of displacement and relocation during various changes in the literal and a-literal borders between Italy and former Yugoslavia (Slovenia and Croatia). Contrary to the poststructuralist constructions of hybridity and cultural intermingling, so prominent in anthropological work on the Mexico-US border, Ballinger (2003) singles out the border as an ideological construction from which those scholars in search for the truth of either hybridity or 'purity' can wrongly assert authoritative statements of a highly depoliticised nature.

If important contestations of border image approach seem to come from the apparently volatile state borders of Europe, Heyman (1994) formulates a border policy approach to the Mexico-US border and argues that it should be used for other borders too, thereby emphasising that every border is characterised by a specific political ecology which needs to

be researched rather than deductively assumed from a vague metaphorical notion of borders (as in the 'border-as-image' approach). He opposes the extensive use of the border as location for the purpose of creating a metaphorical language of postmodernist projects of deterritorialisation, depoliticisation, multiplicity and hybridisation. For Heyman, the border appears first of all as a highly concentrated area of a security apparatus by which the state conveys symbolically and materially its power and sovereignty onto its territory. He stresses the political aspects of the border as ontologically pre-empting the cultural, because of the deliberate concentration of power enacted through institutions by the central government. Border populations appear not primarily as culture-bearers, but as people who have to survive from day to day, in this way being involved in highly asymmetrical, bureaucratically organized power relations with the state and the capitalist market. Heyman insists we should see the (US-Mexico) border as a particular political ecology in which both populations and bureaucracies occupy particular niches that can and do change over time. If the state has the initiative, populations usually take actions of defiance (like smuggling, for example, which is created and sustained by the capitalist system of the market and the bureaucracy of the state). If the main actors of the border, in poststructuralist views, are the discourses of various border populations which come into contact, mainly in cultural terms, the so-called policy approach calls into question this landscape of relations, by opposing the state and local populations, in the frame of a politically organised ecology. Through this theoretical framework, Heyman explicitly argues against the border image approach. Instead of seeing the fluidity and the infinite possibilities for intermingling within the borderland, he prefers to show that, in historical perspective, the very specific location of the Mexico-US border and the state-to-state border interactions tend to be rather rigid.

Heyman (1994) suggests that the border jargon embraced by postmodernist anthropologists is questionable from two main points of view. First contention regards their assertion that the incoherence and fluidity of the border is not measurable and it is difficult to locate and identify in terms of clear-cut categories, entities etc. The border, Heyman shows, presents numerous measurable categories. Once the anthropologist starts looking at the power structures enacted through border bureaucracies, s/he understands that the numerous arrests, smugglers, deaths at the border are palpable and measurable phenomena which order the realities of the border in ways other than cultural and symbolic indeterminacy. A second

problem is that in postmodernist accounts, ethnographic analysis of border identities is often replaced by logical hybridisations deduced from presumed border's dualisms.

Another critical point of view on 'real borders' against poststructuralist approach comes from Donnan and Wilson (1999) who vindicate their position by similarly considering borders as markers of sovereignty, symbols of power, and sites for security apparatuses. As statist accounts about forces acting 'from above', Donnan and Wilson (1999), as well as Heyman (1994), base their discussion on Weberian notions of territoriality of the state and a clearly defined concept of sovereignty. For them, underlining borders and frontiers – viewed as structures of the state – is a good way to better understand the state and the political as a centre of power, more generally. Although they do consider the more cultural or symbolic facets of international frontiers, those are employed to assert the reality and objectivity of the borders out there and to address everyday processes under the compelling nature of the sovereign state. Such approaches challenge the overuse of the term 'borders' in a metaphorical way and emphasise the borders' materiality and ethnographic particularism. Many anthropological accounts of borders have been stimulated by Barth's (1969) analysis of ethnic boundaries. His emphasis on arbitrariness and fluidity made the analytical focus on borders a good ingredient for anti-modernist critiques of doing and writing ethnography (e.g. Rosaldo 1988; Behar 1993; Alvarez 1995). In contrast, authors such as Donnan and Wilson (1999), Heyman (1994, 1995), Hann and Hann (1998), Rabinowitz (1998), seem to re-open anthropological discussions of borders within the fixed frameworks of geo-political boundaries of the state. They call for terminological (and therefore analytical) precision and argue for using the term 'border' in less sprawling and more precise terms than the 'metaphorists'. They want to limit its use to territorial polity borders (usually state borders) rather than use it potentially for every form of symbolic or discursive difference. Such authors stay close to the ethnographic inquiry and construct a particular representation of borders in relation to their states, asserting their reality, objectivity and materiality over the discursivity, imprecision and ambiguity of competing poststructuralist approaches. For Wilson and Donnan (1998), the main debate seems to be about the relative attention paid to materiality and institutions in borderwork.

If the state is obviously considered a powerful, 'objective' presence, so too are the borders, literally considered 'international'. This implies a geo-political idea of unquestionable

territoriality represented by world maps. According to Wilson and Donnan (1998), borders have three elements: the legal borderline dividing states from each other, physical structures of the state made up of people and institutions, and frontiers, as more or less objectively, territorially defined areas which are also parts of the states but might be negotiated by people living in them differently and contrary to expectations of the nation-state. Borders appear to be stretches of national territories in which the state meets people, or culture, more generally. Culture is then conceptualised by the two authors as necessarily and simultaneously objectified ('an entity associated with a place and owned by a people') and subjectified (as a 'context for relations which seek the realisation of the idealised goals intrinsic to the objectified culture') (Wilson, Donnan 1998: 8).

My thesis will consider these claims, as well as those advocating hybridity and fluidity as points of departure for a critical inquiry into the object of borders in anthropology. As seen from the above statements, the political and its institutional instruments are central matters of concern in the materialist and statist approaches to borders. It also appears in the writings on fluidity, but in rather imprecise terms. Yet, an important point of reference for the elaboration of a critical assessment of the anthropology of borders is the lack of theorising the ways in which borders transform, and the role politics – in its multiple instantiations – plays in their transformation. In relation to this, in earlier work (Radu 2010) I have raised the possibility to conceive of borders as spatiotemporal processes, as spaces of becoming, rather than dwelling – which seems to be the main understanding in the anthropology of borders so far. The promise of approaching borders as processes and spaces of becoming is the integration of eventalisation and rhythmic changes occurring at borders within the notion of transformation. In addition, transformation is to be seen not only at institutional levels at which borders are organised, but also in (inter)subjectivities related to the material and semiotic presence (or absence) of the border. However, before advancing any other claims about transformations at borders, I will draw attention to another anthropological object, which stands in close relationship with the border – the state. As emphasised earlier, the state is seen as inseparable from borders (Reeves 2005, 2007) and is often understood by scholars of frontiers as being in a hierarchical relation with the border. Borders were treated in social sciences as emanating from state projects. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I keep looking at 'the state'.

8.2. STATE

For Marxists, especially Lenin, the state was basically a top-down structure of repression aimed at direct advantage and interests of reproduction by ruling classes – a necessary condition for the fulfilment of relations of production. Either Marxist or classical liberal/Hegelian thinking produced a vision of the state as verticalised, hierarchical, and highly rigid structure, an image which served the practicalities and concreteness of action in politics (see Abrams 2006; Ricoeur 1994).

A neo-Marxist very influential in anthropology was Gramsci (1971) who fought against the simplified liberal approach which differentiates the economy, political society, and civil society. One of the most challenging questions Gramsci (2006) asked was: does the state encompass or identify with civil society? By using the concept of ‘hegemony,’ he shows that, historically, civil society became the most resilient constitutive element of the state. The state is the realisation, in history, of fundamental liberties, but only as they were gained by and for a particular class. This ideology creates delusion for the masses that they exercise ultimate self-determination (Gramsci 2006). The newly realised conjuncture between state and civil society led Gramsci to argue for the need to overcome vulgar Marxism anchored in immediate material life. This became one of the first attempts to go beyond the vision of the state as an autonomous force coercing society and facilitating capitalist production. This connection was emphasised by certain anthropologists and other social scientists engaged with studying the state as a cultural process (Sharma, Gupta 2006; Hansen, Stepputat 2001; Sayer 1994).

Another good linkage between neo-Marxist and more culturalist approaches to the state came from Althusser (2006), explicitly influenced by psychoanalysis, basically Freud and Lacan. He identified the state with an interface between the individual and conditions of production and one of his aims was to solve the duality and opposition between the Marxist infrastructure and superstructure. This was materialised in his view of ideology. Althusser (2006) developed his notion of ideology as universalistic, by comparing it with Freud’s unconscious. He stresses the material, as well as imaginary and cultural character of ideology in which individual conditions of existence are represented. The mechanism that makes possible the embodiment of ideology within individuals is what Althusser calls interpellation.

Through the workings of interpellation by ideology, individuals become subjects, which means that sets of expectations are created and imposed on the individual's conscience and have to be fulfilled through ideological practice.

If, with regard to these concerns, neo-Marxist perspectives on the state do not differ substantially from their liberal and Weberian counterparts (Abrams 2006), Foucault and other poststructuralist thinkers have made a difference in rethinking the state's nature (Rose 1992). Foucault (1991) does not speak about the state, but rather about governmentality, a notion strongly linked to his earlier genealogical analyses, related to the ways discursive truth regimes and flows of capillary power are established (Foucault 1995). Modern (Western European) times appear in Foucault's view as the times of governmentality (1991), a form of government used in a very broad and more complex sense as

‘the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target the population.’ (p. 102)

Foucault, although focused on a certain scheme of evolutionary thinking and being clearly Eurocentric all the way, proved to be very attractive and stimulated very rich anthropological material on the state. One of the interesting Foucauldian-informed theses on the state, still subject of debate in the present, is the point advanced by Trouillot (2001). Trouillot announced the need for anthropologists to study the state beyond its institutional fixity. This was consistent with the shift in the social anthropological focus from the state itself as bureaucratic rational power produced and enacted by institutions or by ruling capitalist classes, in pure Weberian or Marxist views, to the Foucauldian notion of governmentality. If the state is sometimes counterproductively seen as an institution, it should rather be analysed through the effects available to more direct observation. Trouillot suggests that the state could best be conceived of ethnographically as sets of processes, practices and state-effects. Among the state effects he addresses in his discussion are the isolation, identification, legibility and spatialisation.

While the Weberian notion of the state was based on an oppositional model between state and society which stands to explain processes like state-building, state-making etc., carried out by legitimate and rational institutions acting unitarily and coercing local or national populations (Nugent 1994), the Foucauldian alternative of governmentality admits the

presence of competing structures, of both public and private nature, employed to negotiate the possibility to govern and regulate populations on bases different from the previously celebrated monopoly on legitimate violence.

Governmentality, as a mechanism of control, is much more subtle than the state as conceptualised by Marx or Weber, and the legitimate violence of the state seems to be replaced in this case by a disciplinary concern of those in charge with producing knowledge, identifying and monitoring objects of regulation (Foucault 1991). For example, using a Foucauldian frame of analysis, Ong (2000) has shown how states of South East Asia do not lose control and sovereignty due to the pressures of multinational capitalist corporations spreading the neo-liberal global rule, but rather perfect their administrative and coercive apparatuses in order to be able to govern more efficiently the various populations encompassed by the national territories, which are supposed to fulfil different functionalities in the neo-liberal rule. In this way, the state establishes a mode of ‘graduated sovereignty’, by actively governing different populations.

Foucauldian studies of the political, as well as notable neo-Marxist contributions such as Gramsci and Althusser, pose a serious challenge to the binary mode of representing state and society. Inspired by their ethnographies produced in various areas of the world, anthropologists have also tried to conceive differently of this apparent dichotomy. Sampson (2003) and Heyman and Smart (1999) have written about the involvement of state in global predatory civil societies and illicit economies, respectively. Similarly, Volkov (2002) and Bayart (1996) present accounts on states in different areas of the world (post-Soviet Russian state and postcolonial African state, respectively) portraying states as highly privatised entities which do not fit normative constitutionalist political science (see also Radu 2009). With reference to globalization and alliances between state, substate, and global actors, Friedman (2003) has also argued that the state is no longer the coherent and well-bordered object of analysis as it used to be seen. Nugent (1994) argues against the oppositional model by emphasising the case of Peru in which state and society cannot be seen as two separate entities. The issue seems not necessarily to be the effort to centralise power by setting up central institutions of the state, but rather to account for all the possible negotiations and situations of conflict and cooperation that can impose certain forms of power which finally appear embedded in the state apparatuses.

Ferguson and Gupta (2002), following earlier reflections on translocality of the state (Gupta 1995), make a similar powerful point by showing how states are spatialised, in terms of representations and images encountered at grassroots levels of inquiry. By criticising two analytical and popular images of the state – verticality and encompassment, which basically lead many to represent the state as a top-down entity powerfully imposed on local populations – the authors try to depart from the stereotypical image. They do this by tracing how those ‘principles’ are produced. To some extent, the two authors speak about spatiality as a way to solve the puzzle of the oppositional model of state versus society. However, they go a little further and formulate the need to readdress the issue of spatiality. They produce a new model of seeing the spatialising through the notion of transnational governmentality, closely connected to globalisation debates and to the fact that in the last decades the global political economy and the state have been friendlier with each other than ever before.

Their argument is that the state is no longer exclusively spatialised by verticality and encompassment promoted through governmental agencies. Rather, the new spatialisation of the state should be directly related to globalisation and the involvement of various actors which make connections between the local and global under the umbrella of a state discourse and imagery. Among these, it is likely to find a myriad of NGOs, both local and global.

If the transition from Marxist and Weberian to Foucauldian approaches to state can be viewed as a shift towards problematising the state’s verticality, psychoanalytical thinking can be considered a more radical perspective in which the state virtually disappears, becoming an imaginary relation of subjectivation. An important inspiration for such approaches lies with Jacques Lacan, who was interested to find how the self is constituted under the influence of three ontological components – the imaginary, the symbolic and the real (Lacan 2001; Stavrakakis 2004; Sarup 1993; Richardson 1983). For Lacan, the self is never fully constituted, but rather a perpetually incomplete project of identification (Kerrigan 1983). The mechanism through which the self attempts to fulfil his/her fantasies of self-constitution is the so-called mirror stage in which the subject attempts to make themselves through mirroring with images found within realms of experience and practice. Several objects of political analysis – ‘communist’ ideology, or the state – have been taken up by followers of Lacan, including Žižek (1997), and analysed as nodal points (Stavrakakis 2004), which give the subject a sense of unity to various signifiers/‘Others’ which appeared through as incomplete

stages of the self formation. Driven by desire (Deleuze, Guattari 1983), *jouissance* and alienation, as basic processes of subject-making through mirroring, the fragmented subject encounters the imaginary fixation of selves around those signifiers. Anthropologists researching the state have engaged significantly with these psychoanalytical visions, works that will be detailed below.

Ethnography has enabled the construction of a particular social science niche for studying the state, precisely by questioning the permanent temptation of locating the state in certain places and isolating it from what is usually referred to as society, civil society, culture, economy (see Marx, Engels 1970, or Weber 1946). Therefore, the state is introduced as a contentious object of inquiry, with a rather fluid and flexible existence. Basically, anthropology seeks to show that the state is by no means separated from the people who make it up, that the people which make it up develop certain contestations and adaptations of the idea of the state in relation to their everyday worlds.

Among the strengths of the anthropology of the state, there are the tendencies towards problematisation, historicisation, and particularisation of its object of inquiry. Many anthropologists have recently synthesised the approach. For example, Hansen and Stepputat (2001) have inquired into ‘practical languages of governance’ and ‘symbolic languages of authority,’ taking up anthropology’s much debated concern with ‘culture’, plus the role of praxis and symbolism in the constitutive strategies of various nation-states across the postcolonial world. They, as well as others (e.g. Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005; Sharma and Gupta 2006), assert that the ethnographic focus must be continuously placed on what are the actual practices and discourses through which government comes to be seen as legitimate, a question which fuelled further imaginations by anthropologists who sought to cover the state ethnographically.

For Steinmetz (1999) and Bourdieu (1999) the challenge of considering the state differently, from an anthropological point of view, lies in seeing the state as effect of more general cultural processes, rather than mere producer of culture. Mitchell (2006) has also argued that the very nature of a homogeneous, unitary, and autonomous state with institutional existence separated from society is in fact a construction generated through everyday social practices and through various discursive fields of power. The state seems to be a problematic object of analysis with very imprecise empirical and analytical boundaries, while state effects,

which are culturally grounded and accessible through material practices, bring 'the state' into being and appear as a more feasible ethnographic focus.

An attempt to develop an analytics of state boundaries and margins is provided by Das and Poole (2004) and Jeganathan (2004). These authors, fuelled by inspiration from Agamben's work on sovereignty and state of exception (1998) and Foucault's governmentality (1991), move the understandings of the state into the realms of law, exceptionalism and biopolitics. In a similar way to other scholarship on the state (Steinmetz 1999; Mitchell 2006), Das and Poole (2004) show how the state has fluid, moving margins, and in its constitutive movements, several spaces of inclusion and exclusion are created both inside and outside 'the state'. In other words, the state is a particular construct which gets objectified in various strategies for governing populations. In this sense, the state's sovereignty and margins are placed quite far from a narrow understanding of territory, and the authors display a delicate sense of state spatiality.

Thus, the state appears to anthropologists as a fragmented field partly enacted by interactions between bureaucrats and their clients, all working through their practices, fantasies, emotions and imaginings and producing state effects. In this register, in which the state is mostly an imprecise object of knowledge exposed to interpretations and contestations by individuals and groups, lies the work of Nuijten (2003). Having worked on a Mexican *ejido*, the author examines the particular constructions of the state by Mexican peasants. The state comes up to the ethnographer's lens as a 'collection of decentred practices without a central agency, or core project.' (p. 15) However, by using democratic mechanisms, such as presidential elections, it is imagined as a 'hope-generating machine', which includes various dimensions of bureaucracy that creates perpetual openings and leave people with the open-ended sense, that one never knows what may be possible. Similarly, Gupta (1995) brings the state down to the interactions between people and local bureaucracies and provides new ways to seeing the state as a particular signifier. From his ethnographic cases from the Indian countryside, the author develops a thesis of the state as being an imagined entity. Personal experiences with various bureaucracies enable various constructions of the state. Practically, Gupta suggests, the state should be studied in a multi-sited ethnographic endeavour, by following the ethnographic details into larger, global contexts and connections (as his case goes, connections between the local redistribution of funds and global allocation of

development programs to particular states, for example). Like Nuijten's ethnography, Gupta's material demonstrates that the state can hardly be conceived of as a coherent entity, in analytical terms. Yet, to a degree it appears to people as coherent (i.e. to the degree that the principles of verticality and encompassment are realised and acknowledged by people). His ethnographies show how, on the contrary, the state appears caught between contradictory agendas and purposes, local and central bureaucrats, bureaucrats and the people they address.

A good illustration of the questionable existence of the state as an objective entity 'out there' and a close look at specific ways in which the state is produced and reproduced locally came from Harvey (2005). At the local level, the author shows, the boundaries between state, supposedly embodied by local officials, and the locals are already blurred in everyday interactions. She shows how the Peruvian state came to a deep crisis of legibility since its independence in early 19th century. Funding and protection problems, war and agrarian reforms – all accelerated the disappearance and disconnection of the state from local lives. This generated a sense of abandonment in people, which was not compensated by the presence of local officials. Things changed suddenly when president Fujimori visited their village. If their previous expectations of their relation to the state were in terms of asymmetry and hierarchy, locals found themselves suddenly in the presence of a feeling of intimacy with the state – they were placed into proximity and intimacy with the president, while the president was disconnected from the more abstract source of state power.

From the position of the state as subject of power and knowledge, anthropology informed by psychoanalysis has also made some important contributions. For example, Aretxaga (2003) looked at the imagery of desire and fear for political power which creates a subjective dynamics that link people to states. Aretxaga pays much attention to the everyday, which becomes the site for the production and reproduction of the state. Referencing Lacan's mirror stage and asserting the demise of the object-subject distinction, she makes the powerful point that it is not only that people imagine the state but also

'the state itself in its multiple incarnations enacts its own fantasies (...) the state and its threatening Other are produced as fetishes of each other, constructing reality as an endless play of mirror images.' (p. 402)

A similar account comes from Navaro-Yashin (2007) who writes about non-English speaking Turkish Cypriots in London. The state appears here as a powerful presence of

officially issued documents or letters. As they cannot read English, official letters produce panic and intense affects related to the state. The reality of the state is thus enforced through fictions about what those letters might contain, but also through the bureaucrats issuing particular documents to particular people. A similar ethnographic reading came from Taussig (1992) who is preoccupied with the fetish character of the state. For Durkheim (1995), what is represented in totems is society itself. If Durkheimian representations ‘of the totem are... more actively powerful than the totem itself’ (p. 128), so too are the imaginings of the fetish state, which, in this way, obtains power over the represented. Taussig borrows the example by Althusser telling a story of a policeman wearing the state – uniform, badge etc. – and his fantasies when interpellating a vagrant who also starts fantasising about state’s power at the policeman’s appearance (Taussig 1992). Thus, Taussig suggests the inter-subjective, fetishist creation of the state in the everyday encounters.

To conclude at this point, insights provided by anthropological fieldwork on state issues show clearly that the border-state relations should be treated cautiously. Contestations of coherence and ‘objective’ existence of states to the complex discussion of state effects and various sources of subjectivation for those who represent ‘the state’, all provide many motives to question the supposed relation between the two. From a different angle, positioning straightforwardly in either border image or border policy approach would also be wrong. Dealing with the issue of transformation of borders, the next subchapter is aimed at a further emphasis on the anthropology of frontiers.

8.3. QUESTIONS OF BECOMING: A FURTHER EMPHASIS ON BORDERS

The subchapter argues for conceiving the frontier⁷ as a becoming entity, beyond the state or an assumed centre to which it is sometimes positioned as a margin. The border is hereby considered beyond its territorial dimension and appears as a multiplicity of spaces imbued with subjectivity and relations reflected in areas of crossing and dwelling, a space in its continuous becoming, or a tidemark, to use Green’s (2009) suggestion. A strength of the

⁷ I will consider ‘frontier’ and ‘border’ as interchangeable terms throughout the thesis.

notion of tidemark is that it does not take for granted certain real-existing lines, but that it keeps the territorial dimension; in other words, that it allows a non-essentialist understanding of borders as contingent without missing their ‘territoriality’. In addition, the territoriality understood in the constitution of ‘tidemark’ is an alternative, flexible and somewhat mobile notion, much more social-relational and closer to a vision of ‘space’ as transformable. Therefore, this subchapter claims that it is more to borders than fixed geographical, marginal locations, concentrations of state institutions, or sites of culturally-patterned negotiations.

By holding on to conventional views of territory and its relations to states and sovereignties, social scientists including historians, political scientists, geographers, generally obscure the complex interactions between individuals and regimes of border crossing. On the other hand, anthropologists are better equipped to unlock more in-depth understandings of border processes. Taking this anthropological vantage point, this thesis is committed to locate borders at the level of the intersubjective relation, in the everyday encounters between people in order to understand why borders do sometimes stay the same and sometimes change significantly over short periods of time, what their spatio-temporal creations are, how they enact themselves and others or how are they enacted from outside. It is argued that all these aspects of transformation can be grasped through a careful examination of the ways people engage with borders, in practices and imaginations.

Anthropologists engage with questions of praxis and transformation of borders: How do borders change? How are borders made (and re-made)? By whom? It is often assumed in the anthropological literature on borders that frontiers change with the transformations in the limits and lines of sovereignty or with the state-making processes (Wilson, Donnan 1998; Heyman 1994). Changes in central policies determine changes in borders and border regimes, with the mediation and negotiation of local cultures. This thesis wants to emphasise an important point made implicitly by anthropologists (Green 2005; Green 2009; Donnan, Wilson 2010) – transformations in borders are not exclusive domains of action by the state. Therefore, the transformative activity by the border itself and others that intentionally or incidentally make the border and border regimes is understandable not only from a statist point of view, but also from a more detailed account which takes into consideration issues of intersubjectivity, space and time. Taking into account the scope and potentiality of the anthropological inquiry, this subchapter advances the idea

of the border as a becoming entity, never-quite-fixed, and as an actor network set into continual motion by various actants, including the state, which is however not central. The border as activity also entails the possibility for borderlanders, institutions and scholars to scale down and up the frontier's spatiality and temporality according to the reference that concentrates the transformative activity which is considered to make or remake the border. Tracing this play of scales allows the anthropologist to understand various simultaneous processes that make and unmake a border.

Taking the 'materialist', anti-poststructuralist suggestions from the literature reviewed earlier, it seems that borders have been seen by anthropologists (Heyman 1994; Wilson, Donnan 1998; Donnan, Wilson 1999) as territorial and socio-cultural annexes of the state and, consequently, as instantiations of politics and power that are already in place, with little potential for transformation. This sometimes implies seeing the border as a place of negotiation and confrontation between asymmetrical forces: representatives of the sovereign state and crossers/non-crossers. Using the notion of border as a duality of state and society without a clear understanding of a spatio-temporalised subjectivity, there is a risk to contribute to the reification of 1) the state and 2) border populations. The political ecology of Heyman (1994) in which the US-Mexican border is seen as a place in which the state regulates and restricts the border while local populations struggle to survive and respond to state actions by illegal practices is a good example of this reification. In this picture, the border appears as a territory which is successfully engineered by the state, and that obscures the process through which the border is made by everyday practices, imaginations and significations. By engaging in this descriptions of borders with ontological effects, a sort of state centrism is developed, like in other social disciplines.

It is curious to see that the critical examination of the state in anthropology has not affected much the ways anthropology approaches borders. In relation to borders, states tend to remain monolithic and coherent entities (Wilson, Donnan 1998; Heyman 1994), whereas they are rather fragmented and unfulfilled projects of statecraft, recreated in the everyday practices (Ferguson, Gupta 2002; Gupta 1995; Trouillot 2001). Also, border populations seem to be considered as stable 'objects', with limited and predictable movement/mobility in relation to the state. However, the diversity of border ethnographies and processes under consideration by anthropologists leave space to dereification of such notions. I consider that important

contributions, among which Donnan and Wilson (2010) and Green (2009, 2005) build a solid ground for an entangled image of the border as a spatio-temporal production and transformation in which both states and populations take part, in their everyday interactions. Notions of ‘tidemark’ (Green 2009) and ‘frontier effect’ (Donnan, Wilson 2010) constitute in my reading a major opening towards an intersubjective spatio-temporality of the border and a glimpse into conceiving the border as:

- 1) Non-essential, never-quite-fixed entity (produced by practices, activity and process), rather than a fixed one, and
- 2) Actor network temporarily (de)stabilised by, and allowing the proliferation of a whole range of actants, including, but certainly not only state institutions.

The point is that anthropologists, although not explicitly do already consider the frontiers as becoming entities and actor networks and redirect a closer look at both internal-personal and relational experiences of crossing and dwelling the frontier in their multiplicity and various scales, translated as processes and activities that make and transform borders. However, in my reading, this approach to borders needs to be further theorised. It is important to mention at this point that the thesis considers the Romania-Yugoslavia border simultaneously a becoming, never-quite-fixed entity and an actor network. The twofold definition aims at clear analytical results. First, the notion of the border as a becoming entity allows the anthropologist to trace the border along processes of transformation or reproduction and maintenance of various elements of its *status quo*. Second, the notion of the border as an actor network allows for a disaggregation of the border-object into various specific and contextual actants (human and non-human) and their interests, intentionality and activity. It also describes the border as a network of relations, connections and interruptions between various actants.

It can be said there is a twofold widespread conceptual emphasis in the anthropology of borders, prompted by two notions: 1) territory, with its assumptions of marginality of border areas and the centrality of the state as the main actant in the border space (Wilson, Donnan 1998; Donnan, Wilson 1999; Heyman 1994), and 2) culture (Wilson, Donnan 1998). Yet, the overuse of these notions in explaining border situations poses the risk of overlooking some of the everyday dynamics at borders and disowning the border of spatiality and temporality. Let us now look at both in turn.

Borderlands are sometimes considered to represent marginal territories of the state, relatively fixed in space and continuous in time (Donnan, Wilson 1999; Wilson, Donnan 1998; Heyman 1994). Fixity and continuity produce a homogeneous notion of subjective experience of the border: people are expected to react in similar ways to the opportunities and restrictions enacted through the presence of the border. Marginality and the significant presence of the state create the impression that the border is acted from afar, by a different entity, and points to a specific mode of ordering. Territoriality, linked with the enforcement of sovereignty leave us with the understanding of the border as a place of duality, barrier and separation, and, at the same time, a place that creates the fiction of consensus and homogenised experience. All these ideas linked to territoriality converge to the representation of the border as a line which is counterbalanced through the notion of tidemark (Green 2009). However, an unproblematic notion of territory seems less desirable in explaining borders. The appearance of the border as a margin of territory, constituted a reason for many to treat borders in their dimension and capacity to separate cultures, societies and sovereignties, thus reiterating the magicalities and fantasies of states in relation to their geographical margins. Yet, there is more to borders than their capacity to separate and demarcate. In Eastern Europe, even during the Cold War, as this thesis shows, various border regimes were created and proliferated. On one hand, these regimes instituted claims to absolute restrictions on cross-border mobility which were strictly enforced by impressive military apparatuses. On the other hand, whilst looking at the everyday practices, circumventions of official rules, or the slight changes in the crossing regimes implemented over the years, we learn that fixity and continuity have permanently been challenged (Berdahl 1999; Green 2005; Radu forthcoming). The effects of these regimes have not necessarily been restrictive to crossing and dwelling. Rather, possibilities to live with the border and to redefine it have multiplied, along with the sense of politics and subjective interpretation. It is not just the (un)successful rationality and engineering by the state (Scott 1998) that pressures borders to change and become different spaces, but also the daily activities of borderlanders and hinterlanders, all related to crossing and dwelling the border.

First, the focus on territory includes the assumption of the naturalisation of borders as the limits of sovereignty enacted by the state and its apparatuses. A significant counter-argument to this comes from Elden (2009), who demonstrates that ‘territory’ is primarily

a political-strategic term. It represents a bundle of political technologies, a measure of control. Only secondary it can be taken as a reference to the spatial organization of the everyday activities. Also, Elden shows that territory became a fixed and immovable thing. All in all, the concept constitutes an ideological construction, sometimes not reflected in the everyday life of border dwellers and crossers. On the other hand, speaking of territory includes the assumption of an existing center and margin in its distribution and organisation, assumption with important consequences in conceiving power relations and marginality of border areas. However, marginality of borders has been widely criticised from the standpoint of confronting evasive discourses with practicalities and movements of the everyday life (Green 2005).

Second, borders are imprecisely linked to the concept of culture. There is a positive side in the treatment of borders in relation to culture though. Anthropologists have sought to argue against the fixed parameters of borders in terms of territory by using the coexistence, sameness and the imperfect fit of cultures at international frontiers. Culture has thus been used extensively into an anti-territorial critique of sovereignty and nationalism which affected a lot the way anthropologists think about borders today (see, for example, Cole and Wolf 1974). On these grounds, borders were critically studied by anthropologists as reified delineations of sovereignty projects through tracing practices that try to make them into things. There is however a risk in getting to borders via concept of culture. Culture, especially in its cognitivist, evolutionist, ecological and holist understandings (Geertz 1973; Rappaport 1971; Kroeber, Kluckhohn, Meyer, Untereiner 1952) has been fetishised to a large degree to the point that it can provide a strange spectrum of the social. Usually seen monolithically, and less intersubjectively, culture promotes a 'natural' reproduction and continuity of the social life, leaving limited room to explaining disruptions of order, lack of consensus, political subjectivities, creative events and change. A poststructuralist critique of culture developed in the 1980's points out these aspects (Marcus, Fischer 1999). Culture has thus been revealed to provide little manoeuvre with transformations, temporality and spatiality. In this understanding, the culture-concept suggest autonomous, self-generating sources of patterned practices. In this context, time seems to make little sense to culture and consequently to borders and their transformations.

Culture is also highly debateable from the point of view of the ways it is being used

on a daily basis as a technology, as a way to create meaning to other ideological and analytical objects of the social. In this fashion, borders can become meaningful through their cultural treatment. A relevant argument of this point is the materialist and neo-Marxist critique of culture that generally points out the ways culture becomes the ideal tool in preserving notions of sovereignty, state apparatuses, and capitalist domination. In order to explain borders as becoming entities, 'culture' needs a different vision that takes into consideration its interdependence, interaction with processes of power and the potential to differentiate and connect at various scales, including the intersubjective one. A particular critique of culture from the standpoint of neo-marxist cultural geography is useful here to describe the contentious nature of the re-reified culture-concept that becomes the starting level of powerful and simplifying determinisms of social practices.

'(...) I accepted that the cultural is always political, but took issue with theories that constructed culture as a specific "realm," "domain," or "signifying system." To me, such theories both re-reified culture, and rehabilitated something like a base-superstructure model, only this time with causality running in the opposite direction. (...) Culture was an effect of struggles over power that was expressed as a reification of meaning, certain ways of life, or patterns of social relations: it is a materially based idea (or ideology) about social difference.' (Mitchell 2004: 62)

'Culture' has usually been invested in the US-based anthropological thinking with the power to determine social life in an atemporal, ahistorical and homogeneous manner. Even if the anthropological studies on borders treat culture differently, if we are to study borders in their becoming and activity, in the ways they are made and remade and by whom, culture should be cautiously engaged with. Fixity and continuity in both territory and culture deprive borders of (historical) time and transforming spatiality, which are so common references during the border fieldwork. While the territory is organised by the state and sets limits, culture is usually seen as a counterhegemonic, an abstract entity in relation to the state and its territorial enforcement (Driessen 1998; Rabinowitz 1998; Wilson, Donnan 1998; Hann, Hann 1998). However, this relation proves to be changing over time and it needs to be permanently re-scaled, aspects which are not always visible in a territory-culture-state analytical framework. Therefore, culture and territory may be often seen as powerful ideological constructs which are not very helpful in our understanding of borders. An important contribution of

anthropology of borders can be tracing their production, the way in which they are reified and become fictions/constructs with real effects.

In addressing borders as a becoming entity and an actor network beyond the atemporality and fixed spatiality of culture and territory, it is particularly interesting to discuss two recent contributions in the anthropology of borders: Green (2009) and Donnan and Wilson (2010). Examining these two materials comparatively and complementarily brings to light a promising effort to spatialise and temporalise borders and a productive framework for future analysis.

Similar to their previous seminal contributions to the anthropology of borders (Donnan, Wilson 1999, 1994; Wilson, Donnan 1998), Donnan and Wilson (2010) ground their discussion in the global evidence that borders and states resist globalisation and present high ethno-territorial variation. Mobility – legal, illegal, forced or voluntary - is a key conceptual category which defines borders as areas of tension and transformation. The degree of mobility and the tensions that characterise borders to a variable measure determine the institutional concentration at borders. Borders thus appear as institutions aimed at controlling mobility flows. The institutional nature of borders indicates that the relation between border and state is still a strong one, analytically and practically. The experience with the borders is thus largely seen as an experience with the state power. This experience is more precisely seen in the light of the coercive power of the state, a relation fuelled by the fact that state and economy do often come into conflict at borders. The centrality of the state at borders is well expressed in the following statement:

‘in the midst of so much that is in flux some things that give substance to the social, political and economic life still remain remarkably fixed in place’. (p. 6)

It is perhaps the very marginality of the border area that pushes people into circumventing the state’s rules and restrictions upon mobility. From the autonomous dynamics of the border populations trying to evade the state, an important bottom-up consideration is drawn – borderlanders are active agents of change at borders. Yet, the ways in which the agentic capacity of borderlanders is set into motion and the degree to which they can transform and (re)make the border, eventually, are dependent on a series of considerations which lie at the core of the authors’ conception about the anthropology of

borders. According to Donnan and Wilson, there are three layers from which one can consider thinking analytically of borders. First, there are the ‘international frontiers’, defined as areas in which cultures, both national and transnational, are negotiated. International frontiers constitute the larger territorial reference for borders and function as territorial containers for cultures and arenas of the performativity and interaction of those cultures. Second, there are ‘borders’, articulated as areas that extend beyond borderlines. Third, there are the borderlines themselves, abstract representations of the demarcation between states (and sovereignties) which include material border infrastructure. Considering the border as a multi-scaled entity is a very useful argument and observation. Yet, the criterion from which this multi-scaling is considered is offered by the notion of ‘territory’. All in all, whatever the scale we take into consideration for a discussion of borders, it is strikingly two aspects that are important: the territory and culture, animated through political negotiations and contestations. Therefore, it is in my reading of Donnan and Wilson (2010) that the space and time of the agency of borderlanders antagonise, or not, with the state, while the institutional dimension of borders is strongly linked to territory and culture.

However, borders are dynamic areas in which the interactions between state and different cultures reverberate far away from the marginal territories of the state. Related to the fact that what happens at the border cannot be limited to a particular geographical site, the authors introduce ‘the frontier effect’ – a key notion which is hereby considered as a way to open borders to a different spatio-temporalisation. The ‘frontier effect’ is discussed as a process of de-localisation of the frontier, a spatialisation which can make the border either visible or invisible to others, according to circumstances and interests. The frontier effect, as an ideological construction stemming from the relation between the state and the borderland gives identity and specificity to the border area:

‘This ‘frontier effect’ really does set borderlanders apart from others, close and distant, and does so within often stark political and economic realities.’ (p. 10)

Furthermore, I argue that the frontier effect is a valuable notion from which one can start thinking to relate the border to processes and transformation occurred in time and space and not limited to specific marginal geographical areas within the territories of the states. On the other hand, the border effect allows individual and subjective variation and

situational re-scalings of the border's space and time, by multiplying and opening the border far beyond the metaphor of line and barrier between different national territories and cultures. As it can draw attention to an ideological, reifying construct, the frontier effect can also be a very useful tool into reconsidering culture at borders. On the other hand, the frontier effect can indicate directly the agentive capacity of the actants (human and non-human) within the border network, and the border as becoming entity.

In an equally important contribution to anthropology of borders, in my opinion, Green (2009) presents a critique of unproblematised uses of the line metaphor as an analytical tool, but she does not deny that borders do function as lines in some ways for some people at some points in time. The author's question is how and when borders work in this way and effect people and their subjectivities and relations differently. Green thus rejects an essentialised understanding of delineation that borders are usually imagined to produce. Beyond the 'line' metaphor, Green (2009) advocates the border as a site of relatedness and connectedness. There are no absolute differences between the two sides of the line as far as distinctions are products and effect of an ideological assumption of the 'natural border'. The naturalised border is not necessarily reflected as such in the dynamics of life at the border, is not indicated by the changes in mobility regimes and the unexpected social worlds that go with them. In other words, the cultural negotiations that Donnan and Wilson (2010) frame in the territorial dimension and base in the duality of state and society are not natural givens – they rather indicate a significantly different approach by the borderlanders themselves that may or may not set their lives and meanings apart from the official, ideological bordering carried by the state (which is many times also made by borderlanders employed in border posts).

In distancing herself from the view of borders as necessarily lines and barriers, Green (2009) proposes two other representations of frontiers. The first one is the border as 'trace', which incorporates both space and time, simultaneously and irreducibly. How are negotiations and activity able to change the relation between state and border? How does activity produce respatialisations and re-territorialisations of 'marginal' areas? Green claims that the space-time of borders is a crucial vector of permanent change that sets the border as '*something that is best thought of as an active entity*' (p. 12). It is the permanent movement and transformation into something else, the constant becoming of the

border (Radu 2010), the author considers, that describe social relations and the frontier in spatio-temporal terms. The high variability of border spaces and temporalities already assume rescalings and negotiations, by ‘evoking a notion of absolute difference, without necessarily implying either inequality or separation’ (p. 12). Difference and permanent transformation involve multiplication:

‘all borders are multiple, generated from multiple vantage points – though of course, this does not mean that people are free to imagine border in any way they please: the simultaneity of-stories-so-far, and the entanglement of relationships and ‘power – geometries of space’ regularly constrain whatever vantage point emerges.’ (Green 2009: 16)

Starting from Massey’s (2005) idea of a multiple and lively space as condition and product of politics, a second concept developed by Green (2009) in the same context of conceiving the border as a permanent process is the ‘tidemark’, that incorporates the idea of ‘trace’ and ‘line’, in their multiple instantiations and spatio-temporal transformations.

‘Tidemark also partially evokes the sense of trace, without as yet being clear how much of that is a Taussig kind of trace, with visceral connections to histories that have been erased from view; and/or a Derrida kind of trace, where borderliness is generated from the always-already existence of difference and otherness that did not ever exist, but whose traces are crucial to the sense of border. Tidemark also retains a sense of line – or rather, multiple lines – in the sense of connection and relation, in the sense of movement and trajectory, and in the sense of marking differences that make a difference, at least for a moment. Most of all, tidemark combines space and historical time, and envisages both space and time as being lively and contingent. (p. 17)

The metaphor of tidemark implies both divisions and connections within sites of ongoing reterritorialisations. The territory is not stable, nor eternal, and the border as tidemark is a valuable conceptual tool that points to transformations, both top-down and bottom-up, with full consideration of the various scales and lenses of crossing and dwelling activities at the border. The border as tidemark is also open to interdisciplinary approaches to subjectivity. Cultural geography and psychoanalysis are here valid bodies of knowledge of which anthropologists need to be aware as they provide ‘categories that are already thoroughly spatial providing theoretical orientation to examine complex cultural practices, identities, discourses, and landscapes’ (Kingsbury 2004: 110) and as they enable ‘powerful critical explanations at various scales.’ (p. 119)

As one can see, there has recently been established a significant agreement on the fact that international borders are not natural entities, but constructions through which political fictions and realities live. Borders' fixity and stability were challenged by both the everyday dynamics of social relations and the scholarly work of dereification of analytical objects. It took effort and much research in social sciences to view borders beyond their naturalness, to realise that frontiers are discursive and material fields aimed at artificially separating and thereby making states, communities, cultures and social relations. In particular, social anthropology has taken a great deal of scholarship in border studies and has got a special merit in showing, by means of its specific approach to fieldwork, that borders are in many ways different from what they are aimed to represent.

In addition, the invitation of rethinking the international borders has been suggested by a number of important scholarly contributions. For example, Paasi (1996) has pointed out an alternative way in which we can look at borders: borders are not just stretches of territory, but also places invested with subjectivity. The significance of this is that whereas a territorial representation of the frontier stands for a limit, for an end, a subjective meaning of the border might be the place where relations and connections precisely start. Similarly, Van Houtum and Struver (2002) show that borders are arguments, and activities of connectedness, acting like bridges, as much as they sustain separatedness. These statements suggest that borders are hardly analysable as lines of separation between territories. The idea is that frontiers are rather processes which dynamise both the border spaces and the political and social hinterland in relation to them. From this point of view, Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer (2005) suggest that borders are interesting especially for the processes they entangle which are contained in actions and operations of bordering, rather than for the location they suggest – a point with which this subchapter also started its inquiry. Also against the border as a simple marginal location, Hassner (2002) points out the invisibility and complexity of borders. In line with this, the author argues that the territorial vision of the boundary is too simplistic and fixed to allow scholars think of the ways in which borders change, disappear and appear, restrict or allow relations.

To sum up at this point, this subchapter noted that there are important contributions from anthropology that potentially open up borders to full spatio-temporal consideration and multiplication at different scales. The 'frontier effect' and the 'tidemark' constitute valid

instruments through which anthropologists and other social scientists can problematise and dereify borders, and bring light to various aspects and dimensions of borders.

8.4. BORDER BECOMING AND THE BLACK BOX

There are few other important things I find useful for a deeper consideration of issues of spatiotemporality, activity, and transformation at borders. A relevant critical reference in this regard is actor-network theory. It is argued in this subchapter the valuable contribution that actor-network theory can bring to the study of borders in anthropology. Developed around notions of nature and culture and the way ‘the moderns’ have conceived relations/separations between them, actor-network theory argues that these were artificial constructions and purifications – false dichotomies that legitimised and empowered the mystification and enchantment of scientific discourse (Latour 1993). By mechanism of purification, ‘the moderns’ of the 19th and 20th centuries have sought to make absolute separations between humans and non-humans. By not engaging in processes of ‘translation’, which would have revealed the hybrid character of nature and society forms, they have taken scientific achievements for granted, reproducing the discourse of dichotomy and thus, ultimately, failed to be ‘modern’.

Actor-network theory advances ideas of relationality, inter-activity, and inter-identity between humans and non-humans which seek and sometimes succeed to form networks and give birth to actants. Taking a processual viewpoint, the theory is useful in grasping transformations of various objects of the social world, in both time and space. Allowing for a great diversity and relations in any possible network, Latour assumes a vision of time and space inseparable from each other and multiplied. As Latour (1997) states, there are “as many spaces and times as there are types of relations” (p. 175). This is a peculiar vision of temporality, as time and space have usually been seen as separate categories, in a way disconnected from the diverse worlds of experience (Radu 2010). Space and time thus become spacetimes, intermingled and multiplied with the relational activity contexts within networks. In a brief assessment of Newtonian, Kantian and Leibnizian visions of time and space, Latour (1997) considers that:

‘Time and space are not the Newtonian *sensoria* in which events occur and planets fall along ellipses. But they are not, either, the forms of our perception, the universal *a priori* that our mind has to use in order to frame or accommodate the multiplicity of beings and entities. Far from being primitive terms, they are, on the contrary, *consequences* of the ways in which bodies relate to one another. We will thus link our meditation to the third tradition, the Leibnizian one, that considers space and time as expressing some relation between the entities themselves. But instead of one Space-Time we will generate as many spaces and times as there are types of relations. (...) It makes an enormous difference if those bodies are suffering bodies among other suffering bodies, or a relaxed air-conditioned executive in a bullet train.’ (p. 176)

In a network, establishing and exercising effective control over different actants and relations produces the homogenising of the spacetimes of the network. To exercise control over network relations and entities also implies to be able to circulate individuals, groups, places, events across the network’s space without affecting their stability, that is, without transforming them (Latour 1987). From the perspective of a dominant actant which assumes the network formation and ‘maintenance’, there are few conditions necessary to reach stability. One needs to see, in the first place, all the elements composing the network in their mobile and spatial dimension, that is defining, tracing and following the actants as ‘immutable mobiles.’ (Law, Mol 2001) This allows for a hope for predictability. Second, it is important to design and apply mechanisms to keep stability in the mobility of entities within the network, in order to make transformation impossible. This enforces control and the network itself, as a whole.

‘If those conditions are met, then a small provincial town, or an obscure laboratory, or a puny little company in a garage, that were at first as weak as any other place will become centers dominating at a distance many other places.’ (Latour 1987: 223)

Instead of immutable, stable mobiles, the failure of this mode of control will create bifurcations that will hamper the network as a whole, while maintaining relative power of many different actants, a lack of consensus, and inefficient control apparatus. The role of spacetime in this network formation and stabilisation process is to become a detailed reference aimed at identification, description, and implementing effective control from the network’s dominant actant. As space and time are neither *a priori* categories, nor containers or locations for the events and places that will circulate across the network, considerations of spacetime start from the nature, relations and movements by actants within the network. In other words, as Latour makes clear, time and space alone will not gain prevalence neither in the workings

of networks, nor in the analytical efforts to understand the network. When we try to grasp spatiotemporality of networks, or actants, the obvious methodological suggestion is to identify and trace relations among and between actants, actors, activities and, as Latour says, *shiftings* of all those. Sequences of the dynamics of these relations and shiftings will provide useful insights on spacetime.

‘(...) time is not itself a primary phenomenon. Time passes or not depending on the alignment of other entities. (...) Deeper than time is the question of the obedience and disobedience of humans or non-humans. (...) there are always three *shiftings* simultaneously at work in each account: a shift in space, a shift in time and a shift in actor or actant. (...) deeper than the question of time and space is the very act of shifting, delegating, sending away, translating. We should not speak of time, space, and actant but rather of temporalisation, spatialisation, actantialisation (...) or (...) of timing, spacing, acting. (...) finally, the question of spacing, timing and acting should always be combined with that of their *intensity*.’ (Latour 1997: 178)

This is the picture resulting from the assumption of multiplicity of relations and spacetimes. Each actant may have a different spatiotemporality. When joining a network, the multiple spatiotemporalities tend to homogenise, in relation to the degrees of power and obedience the various actants may play with. In actor-network theory, as a strong account of relationality, spacetime is thus a referent of the actant, actor and their shiftings. The reverse relation, that is an action/activity as a referent of time has been mentioned by anthropologists Munn (1992) and Fabian (1983), as a temporalisation in the form of time reckoning:

‘Actors are not only ‘in’ this time (space-time), but they are constructing it and their own time in the particular kinds of relations they form between themselves (and their purposes) and the temporal reference points (which are also spatial forms).’ (Munn 1992: 104)

In addition, the view of spacetime embedded in actors and their bodily practices is a powerful point made by Bourdieu, and extensively used in anthropology (Munn 1992; Bourdieu 1979, 1990). Spatiotemporality is incorporated in the body, and is inseparable from one’s habitus. This seems to be an important input for actor-network theory, a contribution that takes the individual and their body in its singularity of relation to space and time. Relations between people doing similar or different activity will create premises for connection between similar or different spatiotemporalities: actants, actors, activities, places and events interacting in a given present with references to past or future orientations. An

important discussion of the ways in which different spatiotemporalities and events spread regionally and come in interaction with each other to impact the present activity has been developed in anthropology. Munn (1990) wished to see how a regional spacetime was constructed in a multi-island world of the kula exchange. She found out that translocal events, both past and future, are incorporated in the local, present experience of transaction.

‘In experience, an event is not simply ‘local’ or ‘translocal’ since its recognised parts (and futures) may be both. Indeed, syntheses of the local and translocal (whether kula-related or involving other kinds of inter-island connexions) go on in different ways and contexts in Gawan everyday life. We may say that at any given moment, local and translocal dimensions mutually inform each other and are meshed together; and such syntheses are themselves the grounds and media of ongoing processes of synthesis. (...) The relations between events are developed in the practices of everyday life through infusing the experience of a given event with pasts (or possible pasts) and futures. Thus the unit of the event history is not simply a ‘happening’ but a happening infused (or becoming infused) with more time and space (more events or potential events) than itself’ (Munn 1990: 12-3)

A well-articulated vision of spacetime and its conjunction with the actants and their actions can impact positively an anthropology of borders which is less and less concerned with linear, homogeneous time, or the ahistorical trap of the culture-concept. At this point, actor network theory, as well as the notion of embodied, subjective spacetime which integrates pasts and futures, simultaneously, meet the needs of the anthropological studies on borders which, as formulated by Green (2009), or Donnan and Wilson (2010), require a better sustained opening to spatialisation and temporalisation. Also, by incorporating the notion of shiftings in space, time, and actants in their analyses, anthropologists of borders can clearly grasp that borders are hardly conceivable as state-centric entities. As presumed powerful actants, such as the state, do permanently delegate, translate, and shift their activity to other actants (human and non-human), the border as a network appears much more detailed and complex than the simple state-society framework suggests. In the next (ethnographic) subchapters this shiftings and proliferation will become clearer. In addition, the anthropological work on spacetime, as much as the actor-network theory, indicates that the border needs to be analytically conceived also at the level of the individual’s bodily and subjective relation with other actants. That relation may, or may not be imbued with notions of sovereignty, territory, or culture. This is a question of problematisation and further ethnographic inquiry for the anthropology of borders.

An important vision of the network, or specific actants and actors within the network, is provided by the concept of black box, discussed extensively by both Latour (1987) and Law (1992). A black box is any object, person etc. (network, actant, actor, activity) that becomes so predictable that it can be taken for granted, by appreciation of its inputs and outputs only (Latour 1987). According to Latour, the black box may either be closed or be opened. Closing a box corresponds to the position in which the objects and relations between the objects within it become invisible – they escape scrutiny and visibility. Such ‘blackboxing’ of a network is attained in situations in which a dominant actant succeeds in gaining control over the others. On the other hand, opening the box is due to processes of contestation and alterations of relations that once supported its closing. In his book *Science in Action*, Latour examines the structure of DNA and its visualisations – technoscientific achievements in which the author singles out the moments of controversy, and the process of reaching consensus over those disputes (a process that lasted from 1951 to 1986), in order to explain, among other things, the ways in which scientific knowledge becomes a black box.

It is important that we realise at this point that borders have been considered (closed) black boxes by some social scientists, that is, borders have largely appeared as predictable objects of inquiry. The view of borders as primary references of marginal geographical/territorial locations, delineations, or ‘international frontiers’ coupled with areas of concentrated institutional presence and apparatuses of defence (Heyman 1994) makes less clear the complexities of actants and processes that make continually up and transform borders. In contrast, anthropologists, through notions such as tidemark (Green 2009) or frontier effect (Donnan, Wilson 2010) de-localise and dereify borders and suggest transformations that open them to the multiplicity of actants, subjectivities, processes and activities that perpetually contribute to their making. The role of actor-network theory, in the context of the anthropology of borders, would be to question and investigate whether we can see borders as black boxes, in terms of inputs and outputs only. It would also allow us to trace the actants and their relations and activities within the border network. It is suggested here, in line with the objectives of this thesis, that a disenchantment of the object of borders in anthropology is more than welcome. Ethnographies that use actor network theory can generate different ontological effects on borders, analytically, and can also support a clear

understanding of their becoming and transformation, by following actants and processes in their search of control and power that generates blackboxing.

It is important to mention that Law (1992) considers that the black box can represent a punctualisation in the network, that is, a dominant actant, actor, or activity that supports the network's stabilisation, simplification, and that stops bifurcations and ramifications. Therefore, closing/punctualisation and opening are crucial processes in the becoming of the network and, consequently, in its naturalisation and movement from the 'manifest' to the 'immanent'. If anthropologists consider borders as actor-networks, or becoming entities, they need to concentrate on processes of opening and closing, which specify in detail the actants, intentions, interests, alliances and activities that make continual change possible. This approach to borders seems productive in two ways. First, anthropologists will multiply and extend the notions that give them analytical access to borders – territory, culture, state etc. Second, considering borders as actor-networks, or becoming entities, anthropologists will be able to scale down and up their focus of inquiry and thus examine in detail various actants and their relations, not necessarily the state or cultural practices, that make and remake the border. As a consequence, engaging with the actor-network theory, anthropology can produce a dereified study of borders. Processes which anthropologists of borders engage with describe ways in which actors and actants come to get precedence and influence over others, within a network they are part of. The visible, manifest outcomes of their activity resulting in closing and opening/punctualisation may not indicate the actants themselves, but forces and actors which need to be traced in an effort to get to the immanent dimension of the network and its components. In relation to punctualisation, Law (1992) argues that:

'All phenomena are the effect or the product of heterogeneous networks. But in practice we do not cope with endless network ramification. Indeed, much of the time we are not even in a position to detect network complexities. So what is happening? The answer is that if a network acts as a single block, then it disappears, to be replaced by the action itself and the seemingly simple author of that action. At the same time, the way in which the effect is generated is also effaced: for the time being it is neither visible, nor relevant. (...) Actor network theorists sometimes talk of such precarious simplificatory effects as punctualisations, and they certainly index an important feature of the networks of the social.' (p. 385)

Punctualisations, or closed networks – those that are rendered invisible through the action that replaces them, intervene where there is a great deal of consensus and convergent

alliances between actors and actants – in those situations in which the actors can no longer communicate, or narrativise the actants behind them and their actions/effects. Anyway, the network situations can change, as interests, spatial ambitions, and future orientations of the actants bracket consensus and challenge linearity.

As noted in this subchapter, the actor-network theory is beneficial to the anthropological study of borders in a number of ways. Using the actor-network theory, anthropologists can, in my view, disaggregate the border-object and see it in its multiplicity of transformation. It has been argued throughout the chapter that this disaggregated, multiscaled image of borders is crucial to a more realistic and less state-centrist vision of borders. This thesis makes an empirical case that illustrates the border as a becoming entity, or an actor network that comes to be ‘closed’, or ‘blackboxed’ (namely, re-reified) in various discourses, while in practice it remains an open object through the tremendous dynamism of practices and imaginations.

9. DATA DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY: FIELDWORK, FICTION AND ETHNOGRAPHY

The data this thesis uses falls into two major categories, according to their form and sources. The first is literary writings. I analyse three novels about the Romania-Yugoslavia border: Ion Lotreanu’s *Iluzia*, Alexandru Jar’s *Undeva pe Dunăre*, and Alexandru Jar’s *La borna 203*. The second category of data comes from interviews and fieldnotes taken during my fieldwork at that border, in 2009-2010.

As my thesis develops questions about border regimes that were in place in the early post-World War II period, basically the 1950’s and 1960’s, I found the perspective of communicating constructions of the border through novels written in that period challenging and stimulating. The ethnography elaborated in this thesis is thus partly composed of a selection of inspiring thematic fragments that offer a research puzzle and a starting point for reinterpretation of the border space and its regime(s) of control. The interview data are used to develop, confirm, contest these literary representations with subjective, local meaning.

The problem of using fiction ethnographically has been much debated by anthropologists (Laterza 2007). Some of them argue against a valid and productive cohabitation of the two, while others deploy it (Ortner 1995). Agar (1990) is one of the opponents of using fiction in ethnography, arguing that too much emphasis on textuality tends to minimise the research process that lies behind writing and to decrease credibility of the anthropologist's work. On the other hand, Pool (1991) sees textuality as necessary for anthropologists that need to transform cultures into texts – cultures are texts (Geertz 1973) – and stresses that all ethnographies are textual. In their attempts to include reflexivity to their ethnographic productions, anthropologists have been relatively open to playing with fiction. Ortner, in her book *Life and Death on Mt. Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering* (1999), uses autobiographical books by Sherpa mountaineers. Banks (1990) uses Malay novels in order to reveal constructions of Islam and meanings of politics among peasants. Frank (2000) has produced fiction based on her fieldwork experience with strip dancers, with the aim of doing experimental ethnography. So too did Narayan (1999). Harrison (1996) pointed out the ways two female novelists (Zora Neale Hurston and Mary Austin) have sustained their relationships to anthropology and anthropological training and how their training was reflected in their 'ethnic' modernist novels, interpreting their fictional stories as 'data'. In general, anthropologists have seen in popular fiction both a source of valid ethnographic data to interpret and an ethnography itself. Differences between ethnography and fiction have also been intensely discussed among anthropologists. Rinehart (1998) points out that there are different ways in which fiction and ethnography can incorporate or differentiate. According to him, there are categories of conventional ethnography (material collected directly through various techniques of observation, that can later be developed into fictional developments), fiction (writings which the ethnographer can engage with for the purpose of supplementing/complementing their field material) and fictional ethnography (the ethnographer's fictional writing, but based on their incorporated fieldwork experience). A strength of fiction, from the ethnographer's point of view, is that:

'there is a possibility of portraying a complexity of lived experience in fiction that might not always come across in a theoretical explication, even one that is concerned with elucidating the complexity of power relations and human interactions.' (Frank 2000: 483)

The engagement of anthropologists with works of fiction, in one way or another, were usually framed within the so-called crisis of representation which opened up multiple alternatives to representing the world and blurred the boundaries between scientific disciplines and arts, between facts and fiction (Pool 1991). In discussing questions of authorial positioning and authority in relation to ethnographic data collection and representation through ethnographic writing, the ‘crisis of representation’ raised questions of truth claiming, and opened the possibility of conceiving ethnography as a representation among many others with no ‘objectivity’ claim upon the reality described and analysed. Clifford (1986, 1983) has argued that fiction and truth are not antagonistic terms. In relation to that, Frank argues that:

‘Anthropologists have begun to realize that the boundaries between art and science are permeable and to recognise that ethnography is, at its best, a partial truth, consisting of subjective representations and constructions of reality.’ (Frank 2000: 482)

Although these debates have their important place in the recent history of anthropology, I need to stress at this point that the thesis will use fiction as a source material – narrative representations about processes related to Romania-Yugoslavia border – for developing ethnographic analysis in connection to data collected during fieldwork.

What are the uses of fiction in ethnography? Frank points out that fiction can open up multiple interpretations and support non-stereotypical and non-conventional theory making and representation. ‘When factual representation obscures possible alternative interpretations, the explicit use of fiction might be appropriate and evocative.’ (p. 482)

Why use fiction in analysing the border and the border regimes? In common attempts by social scientists to uncover borders, there is extensive use of conventional, presentist and fixed representations of space, power, state etc. While taking fiction to speak ethnographically of the border, we may be illuminated about the relational and negotiable character of the border regime, even in contexts of apparently harsh conditions of control such as the one considered in this thesis. My use of fiction novels sheds light on conceptions of cross-border flows, national security and threat, border guards and their expected and actual behavior towards the object of their attention and daily activity – the frontier. The proletcult literature analysed here builds upon marxist-leninist dimensions of the border and its defence, while the modernist fiction included deals with psychological dramas of border officers developing close relationships with potential and actual offenders of the border regime, that is, illegal

crossers. Although Frank and other experimental ethnographers were less concerned with the theorising potential prompted by fiction as ethnographic inputs, this thesis wants to stress precisely this potential. Therefore, my work on early post-war border regimes at the frontier between Romania and Yugoslavia uses popular fiction not just to strengthen ethnographic facts, but also to extend theoretical arguments and interpretation and open up a creative way to deal with history. In relation to the creative engagement with historical events, largely in the absence of direct ethnographic sources documenting the 1950's and 1960's, I consider that the novels' narratives do substitute historical texts and add flesh and bones to analysis, opening it up to alternative interpretations and complex representations. In the absence of these novels, the ethnography produced in this thesis would certainly be much more difficult to articulate.

Ethnography is much more than the ethnographer's direct bodily experience with the Other. As Ortner (1995) puts it,

'the ethnographic stance (...) is as much an intellectual (and moral) positionality, a constructive and interpretive mode, as it is a bodily process in space and time. Thus, in a recent useful discussion of 'ethnography and the historical imagination,' John and Jean Comaroff spend relatively little time on ethnography in the sense of fieldwork but a great deal of time on ways of reading historical sources ethnographically, that is, partly as if they had been produced through fieldwork (1992).'

Whether based on fieldwork or not, a valid and useful ethnography must be characterised by thickness. Limitations that can affect ethnography and its aims, in Ortner's terms, are less concerned with its sources or conditions of production, but rather with the refusal of such thickness in its writing, that is, poor detail and unarticulated claims of holism. The background to her critical discussion of ethnographic studies of resistance is her commitment to theory and her belief that theories of resistance would benefit more from better and more dedicated ethnographies. A similar point is assumed in my thesis: this border ethnography re-composed of different sources is aimed at intervening in theoretical developments in anthropology, particularly in the anthropology of borders and the state. The works of fiction analysed here were produced in a context of the early Cold War in which the expansion of the Soviet Union into Eastern and Central Europe created new conditions, constraints and opportunities for literary production. Ambitions of the growing Workers' Party to transform cultural production into an object legible and intelligible for everyone make these works of fiction even more interesting to analyse. These conditions, along with aesthetic

questions of proletcult and socialist realism and modernism, will be discussed later in this thesis, in the ethnographic chapters. Nevertheless, for the moment it should be noted that one could object to my choice to analyse works of fiction that are so ‘highly ideological’, representing ‘mystifications’ of ‘history’ and ‘reality’ – works of fiction produced in an environment dominated by censorship and increasing centralisation of cultural delivery. I argue that the nature of mystification one could attribute to these novels is present to a large degree, in reversed forms, in the post-1989 intellectualist attempts of recuperating memory, history, and truth. The post-1989 Romanian right-wing ‘intellectual’ view considers these writings from the 1950’s, ‘60’s, and ‘80’s as a rewriting of history in a way opposed to truth. Yet, I consider, following Foucault (1980), that ‘seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false’ (p. 131-3) is a more productive way of relating to the topic. In other words, Foucault states that:

‘(1) Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. (2) Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. (3) This regime is not merely ideological or super-structural: it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism.’ (p. 133)

For a closer examination of the issue, Bourdieu seems useful again. In *Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1996), he showed that modern literature developed in the 19th century as an autonomous field of the social. His suggestion was to go beyond the singularity and ineffability of the literary work and proceed to connections between fields, such as literature/arts and power, and to the contextualisation of the writers’ positionality and habitus within literary and other fields. It is important to retain this suggestion, and, although much of it goes beyond the scope of my thesis, I will present a careful examination of the authorial and larger politico-cultural context in which the fiction novels were written. Bourdieu oscillates between the characters of Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* and the author himself in order to produce an objectification of the subject. I consider this is a useful point for my ethnography that allows the understanding of the ways in which the novels’ characters do feel, speak, and act in a socio-economic and political context of the border. It also allows for a critical examination of representations and ‘truth’ they reproduce, or challenge.

As mentioned earlier, the ethnography presented here is an articulation of various stories, referentialities and sources: stories told by the novelists that benefit from their situated knowledges embedded in particular, post-war Romanian-Yugoslav context, and stories about events told by my informants. On the second type of stories, it is necessary to mention a few aspects about my experience of fieldwork. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork from October 2009 until September 2010, a period during which I mainly resided in Drobeta Turnu Severin, a Southern border town and port at the Danube with 100,000 inhabitants. Within the period mentioned I also stayed two months in Timișoara, in the area of the Northern, land-border with Serbia. My work on the border unfolded largely in multiple locations on the Romanian side, but also on the Serbian side. Locations for my interviews and observations included villages (Gruia, Eșelnița, Moravița, Gura Văii etc.), border towns (Orșova, Jimbolia), and border checkpoints (Iron Gates I). During fieldwork I travelled several times to Serbia, with friends I made among my respondents, or occasionally with people going there for leisure or business (including shopping in household supplies and small-scale cigarettes smuggling). In Serbia, I visited several locations including Šip, Kladovo, Negotin, Dušanovac. In Timișoara, I extended my approach to various NGOs and associations of former political detainees. Besides recording interviews, doing observations and fieldnotes, I spent time in libraries in Drobeta Turnu Severin and Timișoara, and in the National Archives in Turnu Severin, where I read and collected various documents relevant to the border. It is important to mention that prior to my long-term fieldwork I regularly conducted research visits to the area since 2001/2002. My first research visit in Serbia was in 2006. Given this long experience and knowledge of the border, my fieldwork orientation in terms of respondents and topics of conversation and observation were rather easy. The initial strategy was to focus on occasional observation, socialisation, and making connections. Then I tried to approach gatekeepers who could offer me access to various places I was interested in, such as border checkpoints, or border police inspectorate offices. Certain ‘areas’ of my fieldwork were difficult to reach, particularly in conditions where institutions were accused of ‘corruption’, illegality, and politicisation of the administrative decision-making. As the waiting periods to get to such persons and places were rather long, I started to write systematic fieldnotes in the meantime. From this everyday practice of writing fieldnotes, I realised I became interested in a bundle of ‘topics’, all related to one another. Amongst these topics were: the construction of the dam on

the Danube – a period of almost 10 years which appeared in most of the conversations I had; the early 1950's deportations and massive relocations of population in the 1960's; the landscape transformations, including flooding and disappearance of numerous places along the border, in the 1960's; the smuggling and the general experience of cross-border mobility, connected to the experience of border control and surveillance over a long period; the procedures, techniques and border regimes' modes of implementation in everyday practices by border guards and border policemen in various periods etc. Based on this broad interest, I started to record interviews (many conversations were unstructured life histories) and continued to take notes. This strategy proved particularly productive, as I had access to multiple spatiotemporal references and ways in which people grounded those references locally. Engaging with such interviews, which were in most cases very long, multi-session conversations, I realised two aspects regarding my work. First, everything I was doing constantly reminded of the importance of time and space, and their shiftings in my respondents' narratives, but also to various actants and processes that influenced their lives, imaginations and actions. Second, all the interviews were unconsciously organised by my interlocutors in terms of 'dwelling' and 'crossing,' which I thus took as constituent registers of a particular frontier (inter)subjectivity that changed in relation to various other actants at the border.

My respondents were petty smugglers, local businessmen, displaced and deported people, border policemen (active or retired), seasonal workers in Serbia, local activists, state workers from councils and local government. They included individuals of different ethnic origins – Romanian, German, Serbian, Turkish, Roma.

The major fieldwork techniques were participant observation and interviews. Participant observation was a method once intimately linked to the early positivistic aspirations of social anthropology. Strictly speaking, it was conceived as a method for registering, interpreting and recording (Schwartz, Schwartz 1955). If they were considered at all, relationships between the ethnographer and their respondents were treated as factors influencing or biasing the process of data collection (Vidich 1955), with no further representational or political implications. In addition, scholars of the 1950's and 1960's, when debates on methodologies of all kinds in social sciences seemed to have flourished, made a strict separation between ethical and methodological issues (Jarvie 1969), as if between those

two there were no practical connections critically influencing the outcome. And even more practically stated, participant observation was often seen as an impossibility as the formal requirement of being at the same time stranger and familiar friend to the native population was often questioned (Jarvie 1969), especially from positivistic points of view which operated with crude separations between object and subject.

It took decades for anthropologists to examine and assess critically their practices and discourses as situated researchers. Putting a great deal of emphasis on their positionality in the field in terms of gender and ethnicity, for example, and on the authority of representations they produce, the so-called 'reflexive turn' in anthropology inherently questioned methods, methodological ambitions etc. The shift affected participant observation in particular by turning it into what may be called 'observation of participation' (Tedlock 1991). From the point of view of the reflexive turn more generally, a change was proposed, especially in the way the ethnographer establishes herself/himself as author, as producer of representations (Clifford 1983). My research was committed to a reflexive data collection and writing, processes which are often said to take place simultaneously when doing ethnography (Spradley 1979). Reflexivity, in my case, was produced throughout the stages of establishing myself within field sites – border villages, border posts etc. – in relation to the Other.

Interviewing was coupled with observation in these interconnected field sites. Whether taking the form of life or cross-border mobility histories based on personal narratives, or more structured or semi-structured forms focused on specific problems, according to the niches my informants held within the web of my field sites, interviewing mostly took the form of informal conversations. Informal interviewing constituted not just a source of ethnographic data, but also provided communicative situations in which I tried to place myself in closer relationships. During my fieldwork, I was permanently reminded that ethnography is not about objective and valid data in positivistic terms, but rather subjective and incomplete accounts generated by inherent overlaps between memory and forgetting, resistance and openness, self and other. The relational character of ethnography implied permanent exchanges between the self of the ethnographer and the selves of his respondents, both conscious and unconscious.

Finally, it is important to get back to earlier considerations of this chapter. A particular strength of articulating visions of the border prompted by stories told by novelists, set in a particular time and space, with visions collected from my respondents during fieldwork, is the

promise of minimising the effects of metanarratives, tenets and politico-cultural fashions such as communism and postcommunism. The study of ‘communism’ or ‘socialism’ in its various aspects is a process that occurs with the aim to condemn it. Yet, numerous scholars, among whom anthropologists like Kligman and Verdery (2011), have consistently tried to analyse socialism – society, party and state – as an everyday process. I consider that building on various sources and incorporating works of fiction such as proletcult novels can considerably open the border to creative theorising and formulate a valid counternarrative to scholarly and public tenets.

From a different point of view, the inclusion of an ethnographic chapter where fieldwork data are used is important from the perspective of creating what Birth (2008) calls ‘coevalness.’ Whereas the first two sections of the ethnography deal with the analysis and interpretation of works of fiction, thus presenting historical references of a more or less official and conventional nature, the fieldwork-based section investigates the ways borderlanders themselves speak about ‘local conceptions that organise the past and relate them to ‘general social reality’’ (Birth 2008: 16), that is the borderlanders’ subjective groundings in local temporalities. Both ethnographer, as a receiver and carrier of official histories, and their ‘subjects’ imbued with their local spatiotemporalities are engaged with issues of interpretation, representation, and truth-making (Rabinow 1996). In addition, the ethnographer themselves becomes familiar with the spatiotemporality of their respondents. In this context, the ethnographer should identify and reflect critically on discourse and knowledge that each part invests in their encounter. The basic question for Birth is how to overcome the difficulty of the ethnographer to understand and represent temporality (subjectively relevant) of their respondents, in a context in which the notions of conventional history, seen as a specific and culturally grounded vision on continuity and linear succession of events, might bias the understanding and description of the local social ‘reality’ under study.

‘It is not likely that the ethnographer shares the past with informants, and this burdens the ethnographic task to portray the temporal logics of the local narratives of the past. At least in Trinidad, much of what people say in order to make their lives sensible to others involves how they orientate themselves in culturally shared ideas of the past. The coevalness that Raj established was his doing, through his use of a matrix of temporal frameworks; it was not the product of my imposing a temporal organization on his narratives. In telling me his opinions, he made a great effort to orientate me in his ideas

of time so that I might understand his life and experiences. This put me in his history narratives.’ (p. 18)

In relation to this, Birth uses Foucauldian notions of ‘traditional history’ and ‘effective history’ from the essay *Nietzsche, genealogy, history*.

‘For Foucault, traditional history ‘aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity’ (1984: 88), and effective history ‘deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute realisations’ (1984: 88). These not only are different views of history, but suggest how techniques of creating history organise how the past is thought, and that traditional history homogenises and essentialises the unique qualities of events and also their temporalities by placing them within a general, ‘ideal continuity’, as opposed to leaving them within the sequences and rhythms from which they emerged.’ (Birth 2008: 8-9)

Based on the construction of the Iron Gates dam, including various processes subsequent to this massive building at the border – a sort of ‘effective history,’ to use Foucault’s words – the strategy and ‘data’ conveyed in the final part of the thesis pay special attention to stories collected during fieldwork. These stories reveal subjective spatiotemporalities which are related, but not confused with the bits of ‘traditional history’ which are sometimes communicated by the works of fiction analysed. Similar to Birth’s example of his interlocutor Raj, the conversations and interviews I had with my respondents facilitated free flows of memories, happenings and ideas by my interlocutors: I just followed and listened to them in their references and stories of present, past, and expected futures, thus allowing for much material of local understandings of the border in various places, moments, and events of their lives.

10. THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE BORDER

10.1. THREE FICTION NOVELS IN CONTEXT

This section is aimed at contextualising the ethnographic part of the thesis in terms of politics and culture. It concentrates particularly on cultural production in the 1950's and 1960's, and its relation to aesthetics and politics framed by the communist party's priorities.

Lilly (2001) observes that Yugoslavia had a dogmatic period of 'stalinism' between 1944 and 1949, when institutions and policies elaborated were overtly reproducing the Soviet ones. In 1949, Tito split from the Stalinist bloc. The Comintern resolution that resulted characterised the Yugoslavian communist Party elite as 'fascist' and cancelled all cooperation and friendship between the USSR and the Yugoslavian Federation (Benson 2004). In Yugoslavia, a reformist period started (Lilly 2001) and continued over decades, an era of economic crisis when the party opened the system to liberalisation and redefining relations with the working class. In 1953, for example, collectivisation of private property was abandoned and most of the peasants kept their private ownership over land and other means of production. The state largely retracted from industrial ownership, allowing the 'self-management' of companies – a model that drew on Marx and Engels, rather than on Stalin. Yet, the economy remained centralised, and the management of companies had to comply with the rules of centralisation. While implementing these changes, Yugoslavia relied heavily on Western aid, with a first loan received in 1949. After few years of heavy economic crisis due to war devastations and the preponderant rural character of the economy, Yugoslavia became one of the most prosperous countries in the region, with huge rates of economic growth. Yugoslavian citizens enjoyed freedom to cross borders and standards of living higher than the USSR and the socialist bloc of Eastern and Central Europe.

The situation in Romania was different after the war, and its economic growth was seriously slowed down by war reparations that were paid to the Soviet Union for almost ten years, until 1954. As the other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, Romania remained in the USSR sphere of influence, implementing a rigid centralised economic policy, nationalising and collectivising private property, 90 percent of which was accomplished by 1962. Also, a huge party apparatus with centralised decision-making spread in the territory and covered all areas of social life, from management and ownership of economic companies to cultural life and leisure. Some measures of liberalisation were taken in the second half of 1950's, while a firm orientation to Western economies for the purpose of the so-called 'multilateral development' was only considered in the mid-1960's, during Ceaușescu's accession as party

secretary. Overall, Romania remained amongst the most conservative socialist countries, even more so than the Soviet Union. Borders were strictly defended and controlled, and Romanian citizens were not allowed to travel abroad unless they had special permission in relation to the goals of their visits, and after scrupulous assessments by police and other institutions of repression. Romanian economic development policy was based on heavy industry, rural-urban migration, and low interest in other industrial areas, services or agriculture. While the Yugoslavian Federation was renowned for the high standards of living for its citizens, Romania became in the 1980's the socialist country with lowest levels of consumption per capita, due to an accentuated economic crisis generated by inability to pay foreign debts. Rationing of energy and food were introduced, as in the 1950's, and lasted until 1989, when Ceaușescu announced the end of foreign debt payments.

Critical discourses against the Romanian stalinist period started, along with new political struggles within the party, in 1956, when Gheorghiu Dej was criticised for the unconditional adherence to the Soviet Union in implementing post-war politics within the country. Similar movements were already ongoing in Hungary and Poland, while at a global level there were debates between proponents of stalinism and anti-stalinist khrushchevism. In this context, the role of 'intellectuals' and cultural politics was recognised as important by everyone, including opponents of Gheorghiu Dej, who advocated for more freedom for culture. Yet, as Tismăneanu (2006) observed, changes and shifts from the former dogmatic stalinist period were very slow, as compared to Hungary and Poland, which made the author refer to the Romanian case as 'stalinism for eternity'. The Gheorghiu Dej period of the Romanian Communist Party was marked by the influence of international debates and internal power struggles. Shafir (1985) spoke about the early stalinist period of Gheorghiu Dej in terms of a 'primitive accumulation of legitimacy', as an effort to inhibit possible counterhegemonic movements and its proponents and cultural elites (Verdery 1991). Thus, a certain participation of intellectuals was part of the party's strategy. First, there had been a revisionist effort of re-writing history, a process started in 1947 in conventional and dogmatic terms of marxism-leninism. Then, posts and positions within the educational, particularly university, system were changed accordingly. Second, the production of overtly stalinist arts, politically constituted and aimed at accessing the working class easily, was encouraged under direct and careful supervision by the party (Malița 2009). With the aim of encouraging a new generation

of writers, a school of literature, a literary fund and a school for party cadres were established (Verdery 1991). Beyond the aspect of strict control of literary productions during Gheorghiu-Dej's regime, both before and after Stalin's death, it is thus important to explore the imagination with which the literary productions came up, and to examine the means with which they tried to convey the emergence of the 'new man'.

According to Verdery, 1953-1958 was a period of relaxation of relations between party and culture, with a significant influx of writers into the party structures. In the wake of the relative independence from the Soviet Union declared in the mid-1950's, the party apparatus of culture expected to have a word to say in this repositioning of arts and attempted to create a departure from stalinist orthodoxy. Alexandru Jar, the author of two works of fiction analysed in this ethnographic chapter, was part of this movement, not necessarily approved by the party secretary Gheorghiu Dej. Jar's involvement in this internal dispute of the party concerning the cultural politics was paradoxical. Tismăneanu speaks of Jar as a champion of proletcult – a stalinist, a 'mediocre prose writer'. Yet, apparently, in 1956, Jar became a proponent of liberalisation and was characterised by party dominant structures as an 'anarchic, petty-bourgeois spirit.'

Both works by Alexandru Jar included in this thesis approach the everyday life of the army, particularly the border guards at the frontier between Romania and Yugoslavia. *La borna 203* and *Undeva pe Dunăre* are not singular cases in the literature of that time. In a context in which the Romanian army had suffered heavy losses during the war and when the process of 'stalinisation' weakened it even more (Neagoe, Tender, Văduva 2003), some of its strengths and merits could be communicated in such a literature which generally depicted the individualisation of the heroic military characters in alliance with the collective heroism of the working class. Although the war had ended, the tense Romania-Yugoslavia border offered the perfect location for such a literature. In a historical context of hard, militarised borders as material enactments of the Cold War, frontiers and the military personnel serving them were seen as strategic topics for a new literature aimed at the emerging proletarian class. This literature – often referred to as proletcult or socialist realism – is very useful for descriptions of everyday life, discourses and practices of the military, and is also considered here as a valuable account of border remaking processes.

Although border enforcement had been heavily contested by local populations, and the party had to overcome popular illegitimacy and nation-wide tensions on its way to full power, the two works of fiction describe the productive cohabitation of the new man and society, and a legitimate socioeconomic and political system – a socialist revolution colonising practices and imaginations of soldiers recruited in service at the border and local peasants initially resistant to collectivisation.

The main goal of this ethnographic chapter – composed of three main subchapters – is to question the closedness, fixity, and objectivation of the border, despite harsh enforcement of restrictions to crossing and dwelling. Neither subject, nor legible object, the border appears in the end as a becoming entity, and an actor network alternatively stabilised and destabilised, that proliferates actants, various spacetimes, flows, control strategies and operations, with no ability to homogenise or unify them.

The three subchapters are designed to show the different ways in which the Romania-Yugoslavia border were instantiated over the last decades. By analysing three novels – *La borna 203*, *Undeva pe Dunăre* (Alexandru Jar) and *Iluzia* (Ion Lotreanu) – and a large selection of ethnographic fieldwork material, the subchapters explore the frontier in two periods: the Romanian sovietisation and the breakup of relations with Yugoslavia, in the 1950's, and the de-sovietisation started in the 1960's, which culminated in a re-enactment of good relations with Yugoslavia and the construction of the Iron Gates dam. The three fiction novels refer mainly to the 1950's and early 1960's, although Lotreanu's *Iluzia* was published in the early 1980's. The ethnography concentrates on questions of crossing and dwelling as domains of political subjectivity at the border and the ways in which the border is either closed or opened, not just in the physical and institutional enforcement of Cold War border regimes, but also in terms of 'blackboxing' and 'punctualisation', in the vocabulary of actor-network theory.

From a literary point of view, the two fiction works by Alexandru Jar are discussed here as illustrations of proletcult or socialist realism, while Ion Lotreanu's *Iluzia* belongs to modernism. In the proletcult, socialist realist form, literature should have a message, legible and intelligible, and oppose the aesthetics of bourgeois decadent literature. The goal was to provoke affective resources within the readers in order to make the party's objectives easier to achieve. It started from a Soviet form of avantgarde literature started before the 1917

revolution and developed in the 1920's. This literature was insistently preoccupied with the 'idealisation of heroic individualities and (...) self-perfection and the inward emotional and moral world of the individual' (Steinberg 2002: 4).

Literature in Romanian proletcult was aimed to be an expression of class struggle, that opposed the working class in its formation and effective revolutionary action to the exploitative capitalist remnants of former regimes. In Romania, proletcult and socialist realism were literary productions specific to 1948-1964 period (Simuț 2008c). More precisely, in Romanian literary criticism, a difference is made between proletcult and socialist realism. Both are used depreciatively on the grounds of having been ideological under direct command of the party, and in total neglect of the historical 'truth' and its perception in everyday life (see Simuț 2008a, b, c; Mocanu 1998; Dogaru 2000; Cordoș 1999; Nițescu 1996). Simuț (2008c) considers that even though a difference may have been emphasised between the two, 'dissociation is a trifle, a luxury of intelligent, carpet comparativism between two nonsenses'. Aucouturier (2001) notes that proletcult literature, or socialist realism, initially conceived as autonomous from party and state, was aimed at developing working class creativity in the cultural realm. Developments in the Romanian proletcult and socialist realism should be seen in connection to similar trends in the Soviet literature. In USSR, Alexander Bogdanov, one of the Marx-oriented opponents of Bolsheviks in power, was, in the late 1910's, the founder of 'proletcultura', whose goal was to replace bourgeois culture with a proletarian one. In the early 1920's, Leon Trotsky claimed that proletcultura should transform into a culture beyond classes to respond to a society without classes. In this spirit, both Trotsky and Bogdanov argued for the development of proletcult outside any influence from the party and state. Yet, in the late 1920's and early 1930's, Stalin and Zhdanov took Lenin's theses on the political and progressive nature of arts and culture and emphasised the strong relation between party and literature. The socialist realist writer had been considered by Stalin an engineer of souls, a pedagogist for the masses, and Zhdanov reiterated that socialist realism should be accessible, optimistic and intelligible (Simuț 2008c). There are some differences between the Romanian and Soviet variants though (Cordoș 1999; Selejan 2007). Simuț (2008b) notes that the Romanian proletcult was deeply linked to the Romanian Workers' Party, which was very different from Bogdanov and Trotsky's arguments for the proletarian arts in the USSR. Romanian socialist realism, in turn, relativised the class struggle and conflict over the victory

of the communist revolution, allowing other categories such as peasants or intellectuals express their views. In 1971, Ceaușescu demanded from literature similar aspects that were emphasised in USSR in the 1920's and 1930's (Verdery 1991; Simuț 2008b).

On the other hand, literary modernism displays an emphasis on reason, sociotechnical progress and order, as well as on rebellion and disruption of social life. It is not necessarily political and it does not represent a whole people, like proletcult or socialist realist literature. It is interested in idealism, individualism, metaphysics and mysticism. The third novel under scrutiny here, Ion Lotreanu's *Iluzia*, is a good illustration of some of these tendencies.

All three fiction novels analysed seek to impose truth and legibility, but in different forms and apparently with different aims. Whereas Alexandru Jar is preoccupied with establishing the 'truth' about the Romania-Yugoslavian border in its sovietised version, Ion Lotreanu, a border guard-writer himself, is interested to relativise that 'truth'. To a certain degree, *Iluzia*, published in early 1980's, during Ceaușescu, but referring to the late 1950's-early 1960's Romania-Yugoslavian border, is characterised by a critical discourse about the 'conventional' border which includes the reflection of the 'disenchanted' border guard, and the perspective of the 'illegal' border crosser as well. Lotreanu takes a position that is critical towards the sovietised border regime between Romania and Yugoslavia, a border regime that had been an unquestionable and desirable truth for Jar. Lotreanu writes, and testifies to heterodoxy, while Jar is a defender of a soviet orthodoxy in relation to the border.

There are some differences between the two works of fiction by Jar though. *Undeva pe Dunăre* was published in 1952. Stalin was still alive then, Romania was still paying war reparations to USSR, and all the major societal transformations prompted by sovietisation had already started. Events described in *Undeva pe Dunăre* can be located approximately between 1948 and 1951/2. *La borna 203* was published in 1959, when Romania made its first step towards more independence and the Red Army left the country. Relations with Yugoslavia were improving, and there were large areas in which the border fence had been pulled down. However, the situations described by the latter novel represent the conflictual nature of the Romanian-Yugoslavian relations. Yet, there are no mentions of the Soviet iconography, as it is often the case in *Undeva pe Dunăre*. In addition, as compared with the writings by Jar, *Iluzia* is much more open to ambiguity and critical reflection on the border. However, I argue that all three works of fiction are rich in emotional and imaginative constructions. Whereas Jar

employs and develops a proletarian imagination, considering the alliance between border guards, peasants and other working class members, both an ideal and valid practice superimposed on the location of the border, Lotreanu makes his writing an autobiographical statement from the viewpoint of a lieutenant of border guards, aspiring to become an 'intellectual.' The working class is a major referent to both authors. Yet, the ways they discuss it are different. Regarding this aspect, it is useful to reference Fox (1994), who draws attention to developments in Birmingham cultural studies in the 1980's that echoed neomarxist scholarship and pointed out the diversity of working class and the errors of non-representation of working class subcultures in the monolithic understandings of the concept. Lotreanu acknowledges diversity and factions in working class formation. The author voices a critique against the Romanian army in the 1950's, which was created by cadres hailing from an industrial or peasant working class. The conflict between the few, marginalised cadres with university education, and those with elementary education, but in absolute power, is well illustrated. The difference is acknowledged and set as a scene for struggles. In contrast, Jar insists on a class struggle which ends up in consensus and a monolithic understanding of class, in which border guards of proletarian condition become mentors and allies of peasants in their efforts and difficulties of adhering to collectivisation of agriculture. In Jar's novels, peasants, workers and border guards seek and succeed to act in two directions: 1) actively closing the border, both metaphorically and physically, by defending it, and 2) contributing to working class formation, either in Soviet or autochthonous variants. 'Consensus' is a key word in Jar's work, whose diverse characters unite in their common identification and struggle against the enemy. In Lotreanu, the struggle is open-ended and, although there are some resolutions for the dilemmas expressed, *Iluzia* suggests that ambiguity and difference are preferable to 'consensus.' Whereas *Undeva pe Dunăre* and *La borna 203* close and objectify the border, *Iluzia* opens and problematises it.

The next subchapters are dedicated to a discussion on the works of fiction referred here. *Undeva pe Dunăre*, *La borna 203* and *Iluzia* are followed through as sequences of a progression to a subchapter based on fieldwork material that addresses the question of subjectivity and border remaking at the frontier between Romania and Yugoslavia.

10.2. CLOSING THE BORDER-BLACK BOX

10.2.1. Undeva pe Dunăre (Somewhere at the Danube)

Undeva pe Dunăre is a fiction novel whose general subject is life at the frontier between the People's Republic of Romania and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia⁸. Events do most probably take place between 1949 and 1952, in a rural area of the Southern part of the border. Locations are a few fictitious villages on the Danube: Cătina din Vale, and the border guards' picket situated next to the village, Șopotul Vechi, and Salcina. The main character is Asandei, a young border guard conscript, born and raised in the Eastern part of the country, tractor-driver by occupation in his home village. The border guard, a passionate and heartfelt young man convinced of the superiority of the new, communist society in the making, holds various memory traces from the former regime in which he worked on the estate of a powerful *chiabur*⁹. His former experience of humiliation and exploitation is reactivated in his period of border service, as he is assigned to participate in various actions by border guards against rebellious 'bandits' – friends of 'Titoist' spies from Yugoslavia planning to subvert the border defence and local collectivisation of agriculture. In these operations, Asandei engages in several acts of heroism and eventually dies during a successful attack against a handful of local insurgents. Asandei resembles the Soviet hero soldier Alexander Matrosov, a 19-year man known for his braveness when sacrificing himself to annihilate a German pill-box in a

⁸ The next subchapters refer interchangeably to Serbs and Yugoslavs. The Socialist Republic of Serbia was one of 6 republics that made up the Yugoslavian Federation. After 1963, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

⁹ Big landlord.

1943 battle. In a memorable section of *Undeva pe Dunăre*, Asandei is described while listening to the political deputy¹⁰ reading from the story of Matrosov. He remains unconsciously connected to that story which inspires and obsesses him to the point at which he throws himself onto an enemy and disarms him, but only after the ‘bandit’ opens fire and causes Asandei a wound because of which he dies shortly after. The novel is concentrated on the struggles and alliances between actors from the Romanian side of the border. As compared to the other novel by Alexandru Jar, *La borna 203*, mentions of crossing are few. *Undeva pe Dunăre* emphasises a strong connection between local peasants and border guards, which is strengthened by support from *Securitate*¹¹, and a dramatic fight against anti-communist insurgents referred to as ‘bandits’.

What does this novel communicate about the frontier? First, the border is described as a potential battlefield and state of emergency, and a place in which spies disguised as fishermen, Titoist supporters illegally crossing from Yugoslavia into Romania, and local bandits – a former village mayor, a former policeman and some students – conspire to attack border guards and local communities. From his first days at the border picket, Asandei gets to know this new world. A first event that indicates some criminal intent is the fire set to a mill in a village. The picket alerted, a group of border guards are quickly organised and intervene. In the village, they meet the desperate peasants, seriously concerned about their future, as the burning of the mill is clearly a severe subversion of their means of production. Border guards and peasants try to extinguish the fire because of which everything can be lost. As they have insufficient water and rudimentary means, Asandei thinks that the mill’s engine, by far the most expensive part of the construction, should at least be saved. Thus, without asking for permission from his superior, he runs inside the mill, risking his life in his struggle with the fire. He reaches the engine and struggles to take it down. After several minutes in which the man is almost consumed by flames, he manages to release the engine and take it out through a window. Then, exhausted and wounded, he stumbles out of the building which was about to collapse. This is the first incident in which the border guard Asandei proves his heroic vocation. The event is very relevant as it creates solidarity between border guards and peasants who all realise that they should stay vigilant to repel other attacks in the future. It is the

¹⁰ Person responsible with party propaganda and political education of soldiers in military units.

¹¹ Post-war Romanian intelligence service.

peasants who name the suspects in this case – the landlords of their villages who oppose collectivisation of agricultural properties and seek to intimidate the local population in view of plans to expropriate them and form a collective farm. From this first encounter with the border, Asandei, whose peasant background makes him even more solidary and supportive with the local cause of poor villagers, understands that the border is a space of friends and enemies. The border clearly appears as a world of binaries. Although closed to Yugoslavia, it is still a ‘mine field’ in the interior – a situation that makes necessary increased vigilance and discipline not only amongst border guards, but also on the part of peasants who are required to show the same discipline and ability to conspire against the evil and, most of the time, invisible enemy. The argument for collectivisation, industrialisation, and other party plans for the border and the country it defends arises from conflicts and incidents at the border – various situations in which different actors come to learn who are the friends and allies, and who are the enemies. The border as a bipolar spacetime (friends-working class made up of border guards and local peasants versus enemies – bandit bourgeoisie and *chiaburs*; prior exploitative regime – actual, communist Soviet regime; border physically closed – border opened to suspicions and subversions of order) progresses into the reader’s understanding through several similar events described in the following paragraphs.

Not long after the incident with the mill, there is another important scene that clarifies the role that border guards have to play in the struggle. The moment is not directly communicated, but rather symbolically and pedagogically connected to the dramatic war scene in which the Soviet soldier Alexander Matrosov was involved. Exposing border guards to the reading of that heroic moment of the Soviet soldier reveals to Asandei and his fellows in full passionate consent over the conflict situation at the border in which they are about to become protagonists and heroes. In a way, Matrosov’s drama becomes theirs. The scene is aimed at activating their symbolic understanding of the border situation and the only way possible to its resolution – struggle and sacrifice¹².

‘He started reading slowly:
‘He crawled again, dodging the bullets, around the low dunes and bushes. The blockhouse was now closer than ever. (...) He stood up on one knee, arming his shotgun and started firing towards the embrasure. (...) Alexander arose unto his feet, and lifted his shotgun above his head, shouting to the soldiers clutching in the snow, impatiently awaiting the attack.

¹² Bordered text indicates paragraphs from the fiction works analysed and translated by the author of this thesis.

'For our country! For Stalin! Forward!' And so they raced to the blockhouse.' (...)

He [the lieutenant] felt like he was walking alongside Alexander Matrosov, facing the cruel machine-guns firing from the German blockhouse. He advanced alongside him, he dashed to the ground with him, he crawled through the snow and talked to him about cities and villages of his big country, about the happiness of knowing and transforming the world; he told him about how the poppy flower bloomed on the fields of his Soviet motherland.

The soldiers were also following the path of Alexander Matrosov. Their breath grew deeper, in their big wide eyes one could see a flickering light and they were all looking afar somewhere on a top of a hill guarded by death. Their half opened mouths were almost ready to shout together: 'Keep on going, Matrosov!'. (...) The lieutenant's voice was guiding their steps, their hearts, their souls, towards... (...)

'[Alexander] was only left with an immense inner power and the holy wish of doing his duty as a soldier as well and as quick as he could. His face was burned by the wind and resembled one of a child, but it was enlightened by a hero's decision. Now he was stronger than fire, stronger than the fear of death. (...) Jumping quickly he landed on the right side like he had been by-passing the blockhouse, then when he stood almost near its right side, he turned immediately to the left side and approached the black smoking embrasure and fell with his chest across the shotgun's barrel.

The shotgun chocked and for a moment there was a dead silence so one could hear the murmur of pine trees and the sound of battle that died down, still rumbled.

The soldiers jumped on their feet like a command was given to them – even if it was not – and raced towards the blockhouse. Now the road was opened.

Alexander Matrosov felt like the air was being evacuated from his lungs, he opened the collar of his shirt and screamed:

'Goooo!!!'

Darbadaev's hoarse voice echoed across the entire field.

'For Matrosov!!!' (...)

The political deputy slowly raised his head to look at the faces transfigured by emotions. (...) And then he bumped into Asandei Constantin's face. He sat motionless with his knuckles clinging to his chest, ready to jump forwards. His face was pale, but bursting with determination. His blue eyes had the color of melted steel. He didn't seem to take notice of the others around him. (...)

'Hey, Asandei!'

The soldier snapped out of it, shook his head and tightened his lips. On his face there was a strange light. He warily smiled and mumbled:

'What is it, lieutenant?'

He understood what the officer was thinking about and bowed his head. His thoughts traversed flying all the neighbouring lands and beyond, above the Moldavian hills, journeying with the waters of Siret and the Danube until they reached the sea. (...)

The soldiers looked upon his radiant face, like they just laid eyes on him for the first time. Immediately he was covered with a feeling of warm friendship. They felt they knew him since childhood, and since the *chiabur's* mill.' (Jar 1952: 57-60)

Clearly, the moment represents a sequence of political subjectivation in which Matrosov contaminates, one by one, the lieutenant, Asandei, and the other soldiers gathered

around the reader. In that moment, border guards achieve together the consciousness of themselves as both defenders at the border and proletarians – members of a different, emerging society. From this symbolic intrigue, a symbiosis of various factions within the working class starts. The ways that symbiosis can be fully achieved seem clear for everyone: struggle and victory against the class enemy, just as Matrosov defeated the Germans with his body against the machine gun.

Another important moment of similar significance happens to the local peasants. Their subjectivation, followed by a moment of class consciousness, is described in a scene in which they reflect on the newly built kindergarten of their village, found devastated by a criminal hand, just as the mill was previously burned. Reflection starts from a central peasant character introduced by the novel: Banu. While sadly contemplating the damage done to the kindergarten in which their little children were so happy to learn and play, Banu recollects and shares to the other villagers the conversation he had with Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party and president of the republic, at an agricultural exhibition he attended with a delegation from the village. Banu makes his story a critical suggestion, in the sense that peasants are not yet conscious of the political situation of the moment and do not participate in the class struggle as much as Gheorghiu Dej himself advised all the proletarians of the country.

'We were told what to do, but you see...we forgot...' (...)

'What do you mean, Banu?'

'You know, at the exhibition. When we went to the exhibition in Bucharest.' Banu raised the book slowly moving it, as if that would have helped people remember faster. (...) Then, in those sad moments, they felt their souls touched. Some shook their heads:

'I remember! And we shouldn't forget about it.'

They remembered how they saw Gheorghiu-Dej last summer, at the collective agricultural farms exhibition in Bucharest. (...)

Now, listening to Banu's words, they could almost feel his presence, almost like Gheorghiu-Dej himself was there in the devastated building of the kindergarten. (...)

Banu made his way among peasants and got close to the general secretary. He couldn't get enough of watching him, but he was wary of making eye contact, afraid that his chest might explode because of all that happiness. (...)

Gheorghiu-Dej squeezed his hands hard and facing everybody else asked:

'Where are you from?'

Lupan quickly answered with a hint of pride in his voice:

'From Salcina, Mr. Gheorghiu, on the banks of the Danube. We're neighbors with the Serbians at the border.' The party secretary wanted to talk more about their lives in the village,

but he saw a faint shadow of concern into the eyes of the one who asked the question. He went quiet.

‘The oppressors of Yugoslavia are craving for your life and peace. They want to see you under the dominion of the boyars again,’ said Gheorghiu-Dej in a deep voice. Even if it was clear that he had to leave, he lingered on, as if he wanted to remember each face from the crowd. He squeezed the hands of the others as well: ‘Be careful and do not let pass any of Tito’s law breakers.’ He took a step, turned his head, smiled and walked away with his escorts.

Banu whispered:

‘He is right. We could make the big farm, we have the people.’ (...) And that night, watching the mess from the kindergarten hall, Banu’s voice was trembling with smothered rage.

‘Secretary, we should be careful in order not to let them do that.’

‘Yes! We must always think of the words of Gheorghiu-Dej. He knows the outlaws are scumbags. Their wretched hatred is affecting our children.’

The party secretary, Lupan, raised his hand to signal that he wanted to tell them something. (...)

‘We must help the police to find the enemy’s den. We must find them, that’s why we have eyes and ears. Our party is everywhere during daylight. But they are hiding.’ (Jar 1952: 72-8)

While the source of subjectivation and cohesion with the other factions of the working class is, in the case of border guards, Matrosov and his exemplary sacrifice, peasants realise from the words of the general party secretary himself that they have to cooperate with the party and the state. Gheorghiu Dej makes them aware that the Titoist threat from across the border can compromise solidarity in their border villages and prevent the party from achieving its goals of collectivising agriculture. By becoming collectively conscious of the advice from the general secretary, peasants realise that the border defence should be a collective and solidary effort upon which their safety and prosperity depends. Like in the border guards’ moment of subjectivation, villagers realise the links between the border area they dwell and the nation-wide project of a communist society. They remind themselves spontaneously that they need to set up a collective farm in their village. The moment is also a symbolic progression to a symbiosis between local peasantry, police, and border guards, a symbiosis which strengthens their force against the class enemy, from either inside or outside the country’s border. Here comes a second image of the border –a site for alliances. Soon, the border guards learn about the devastation of the kindergarten and are themselves warned against the possible enemy.

The two scenes in which both border guards and borderlanders come to understand their roles and act together against the enemy represent an important suggestion towards our understanding of the border as a black box. As previously mentioned, the border’s power is

not just to separate and defend the motherland from the Western-funded Yugoslavian enemy, but also to merge diverse actants and actors under a homogeneous, quasi-militarised working class. Consensus is the prerequisite for the becoming of the border as a taken-for-granted object of knowledge, an effective apparatus of defence. As far as the proletarian class did not intensify the struggle inside, the enemy and their threat from outside remained strong, and the border fuzzy and uncertain – an object ‘opened’ to interpretation. At some point, the enemy and their mean plans are also introduced. Buşuleagă, a former policeman in one of the border villages of the novel, is the leader of a gang who stays out of sight of peasants and authorities. He has connections with many other dispersed insurgents, amongst whom Titoist spies from Yugoslavia from whom he regularly gets information and support to resist and attack the ‘communists.’ They have a meeting place in a poor peasant’s house basement that later becomes the place of the final scene when Asandei consumes his moment of sacrifice.

As compared to peasants, border guards and other representatives of the party and state that populate the border area, the insurgents are described as a heterogeneous small group of people, with different interests and with no success in their actions. The investigation conducted by police and *Securitate* officers proceeds and various indications and proofs of a conspiracy network bring the authorities closer to an organised action against ‘bandits’. A person caught just after he crosses the Danube illegally provides indications about the place where insurgents hide. A fisherman with a strange military tent is also retained and questioned at the border guard picket. Local communities and border guards are all warned about the dangers. Banu becomes a confident collaborator of *Securitate* and of the border guards, watching suspect houses in his neighbourhood and reporting everything to the police, village party secretary and to *Securitate* officers. On a night he is visited by two people from *Securitate* who stay with him until late, watching the village bar keeper’s house that is just next to Banu’s place.

An undercover agent is sent to the insurgents where he passes as a person sent from Yugoslavia to sustain their activity against the communist authorities. This agent informs the *Securitate* regularly about the number of bandits, their guns, their plans to attack, their network etc. Border guards soon receive a call to start the action from the regional *Securitate* office. Thus, a number of border guards, amongst whom Asandei, organise quickly and head to the bandits' den. After surrounding the place and summoning the insurgents to surrender,

the bandits open fire. A battle takes place, in which several bandits are wounded and capitulate. However, only Buşuleagă resists and faces all the border guards gathered there. Asandei thus conceives an alternative plan. He proposes to his fellow border guards to crawl to the barrack where Buşuleagă is hiding with his machine gun. From there, one of the soldiers, covered by the others who are expected to open fire, would rush towards the bandit inside, disarm him and hand him over to the the others. The plan is accepted by the superior and, with two comrades, Asandei carries it out. In a critical moment, Asandei, just like the Soviet soldier Matrosov, runs inside the barrack and gets shot in a wrestle with Buşuleagă. The other soldiers also run inside and immobilise the bandit. Asandei dies shortly after the incident, and this is how the story ends. The death of Asandei, the border guard that replicates the Soviet soldier Matrosov, and the victory of communist authorities in their alliance with the border guards and local communities, mark the third image of the border – punctualisation, its pre-emptory black boxing. *Undeva pe Dunăre* makes a strong case for the uses of actor-network theory in the anthropology of borders. Tracing the author's intentionality, historical (post-war sovietisation and break up of relations with Yugoslavia) and literary context (Romanian proletcult fiction), and the narratives constructed around the main characters of the fiction, one can identify significant processes that lead to establishing the border as a black box. Peasants, border guards, proletarians, bandits, policemen, party stuff, *Securitate* agents, foreign spies, all do contribute by specific interests and actions to the closing of the border. The story of Soviet soldier Matrosov is also an important actant that makes subjectivation and political education of border guards possible. Firings and attacks by insurgents create cohesion among peasants and help them formulate their proletarian dream. The existence of a common enemy – the bandits and their Titoist supporters – makes the peasants and the border guards ally under common prescriptions indications of the party-state. As the terrain of all these processes, the border appears as an actor network in its making, an assemblage that cumulates events, actants and processes, simplifying itself and finally becoming a legible entity and a site of unquestionable sociopolitical consensus. It is important to note here that the party state, although a presumed crucial actant within the border network, delegates its actions to various factions of the working class, or creates other actants – such as soldier Matrosov – that achieve the goal of blackboxing.

To summarise at this point, in *Undeva pe Dunăre*, the border is not communicated straight away as an effective apparatus of defence. It is first conveyed as an incoherent, not yet constituted entity characterised by a process of an intense class struggle (and class making) just about to begin between the poor peasants, not yet proletarianised, and the former local bourgeoisie that tries to oppose the party plans. The struggle is an intermediary step to the border's constitution as an entity of separation between Yugoslavia and Romania, between Stalinist and non-Stalinist regional worlds. Until this imagination and practical goal are achieved, the border traverses a process of class purification in the end of which the working class enemy gets annihilated. The border and its effectiveness to delienate seem to depend on sociopolitical consensus and victory against the class adversary. The border thus becomes closed in two respects. First, there is the physical closure that does not allow any crossing to and from Yugoslavia. Although questions of crossing are not staged in Jar's novel, except the capture of a Titoist spy which is important in identifying the gang of insurgents, defence becomes tight, the enforcement rendered effective, and full capacity to separate is clearly formulated only after the working class triumphs and the enemy and their network of collaborators from abroad are annihilated. This is the second – sociopolitical – closure of the border as a black box, materialised in the class struggle that reaches an end with the defeat of the gang of *chiaburs*. Paradoxically, this is the problematic aspect formulated by Jar about the border – the effort to elongate the border into the social and political and manage the factions, interests, and conflicts between various social groups. With the proletarian victory against spies, capitalist landlords and other exponents of the former, bourgeois regime, Alexandru Jar's border purifies and homogenises, the author communicating the representation of the frontier as a black box, an 'object' legible for everyone.

10.2.2. La borna 203 (At the landmark 203)

La borna 203 is another work of fiction by Alexandru Jar. Its main subject is also the Romania-Yugoslavia border in early 1950's. The border is similarly described as an area of conflict that requires a sort of resolution which is achieved at the end of the text. Yet, there are

a few things that differentiate this novel from the earlier. First, there are no longer specifications about the Soviet power, an aspect connected to its publishing date some years after Stalin's death and after the Red Army left Romania. Second, the emphasis on class struggle, although present, is not that salient. Whereas *Undeva pe Dunăre* mainly concentrates on a series of events in villages next to the border line, emphasising in this way situations of dwelling at the border, *La borna 203* stresses the question of cross-border flows and their connections with the areas where borderlanders dwell – the villages of Velnița and Măgura¹³.

La borna 203 is roughly the narrative of two people, with no connections to each other at the outset. The first person is Ion Opaïț, a young man recently recruited into the mandatory service of the Romanian army at the border. The novel starts with Opaïț's arrival at the border guards' picket and continues with his initiation in the control and surveillance service at the border. Opaïț was born in a village of North-Eastern part of Romania, to peasant parents. His performance throughout the narrative is similar to Asandei's from *Undeva pe Dunăre*, although he does not become a tragic hero. Opaïț gradually becomes a subject of the party state, a vigilant border guard with a full-fledged consciousness of the sociopolitical situation created by the border with Titoist Yugoslavia.

The second central character of the novel is a Yugoslavian citizen – Vlada Dabcevič, first introduced in a scene set in Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital. He then reappears at a secret service office in Vršac, where Dabcevič arrived, planning with the Yugoslavian border guards an illegal crossing into Romania. Dabcevič is sent on an undercover infiltration in an important factory in Reșița, a small industrial town south of Timișoara, which he should blow up in order to undermine relations of production in the Romanian 'communist' state. His plan fails at the border, where soldier Ion Opaïț and his fellows on the night shift catch the spy and arrest him. The failed crossing occurred in a place known as 'landmark 203', which the title of the novel refers to. Vlada Dabcevič is described as a person with a bourgeois background, a former Romanian citizen of Serbian origin who served as a lawyer for a Romanian industrial company between the wars. He made it to Yugoslavia during the Soviet occupation of Romania. In Yugoslavia, he changed his profession. He was encouraged to attend classes in a US-funded school of espionage, where the graduates were recruited from as future cadres with specific missions into Romania and other neighbouring countries. Along with Vlada

¹³ Names are fictitious.

Dabcevič's attempt to illegal crossing into Romania, the novel contains several other scenes which describe Yugoslavian spies caught by the soldiers of the same Romanian picket, soon after they pass the ploughed strip of land that marks the limit between the two states. In addition, there are dramatic scenes of crossing into Romania enacted by poor Yugoslavian peasants, or Yugoslavian heroes from the partisan war, lately betrayed and imprisoned by the Tito regime. Like in *Undeva pe Dunăre*, there are no episodes of Romanian citizens making their way into Yugoslavia illegally, although historical accounts (Armanca 2011; Neagoe, Tender, Văduva 2003; Steiner, Magheți 2009) document that flows from Romania into the neighbouring country were the real issue at the beginning of the Soviet occupation and even long after. Numerous observers argue that one of the basic aims of designing very restrictive border regimes throughout the 1947-1989 period was the massive outflow of Romanian citizens who attempted to escape oppression of all kinds. From this point of view, the two novels by Alexandru Jar, but especially *La borna 203*, which concentrates on (illegal) cross-border flows and their management, develop what I call here an anti-flow narrative, connected to an idealised, even utopian notion of dwelling at the border in particular, and within the newly emerging sociopolitical formation, in general. For both novels, a notion of the border strongly connected to conventional ideas of territory and state-centered sovereignty (Beaulac 2004; Ilgen 2003) becomes a possible readers' interpretation which gives way to a familiar border-object, namely, the frontier's imagining as a black box, as a closed box, or punctualisation, in Law's (1999) terms.

The anti-flow narrative results from the anxiety the Romanian side developed in relation to cross-border infringements. Neagoe, Tender and Văduva (2003) claim that since the late 1940's until mid-1950's important changes occurred at the Romania-Yugoslavia border in terms of its reorganisation and supplementing of the defence apparatus with soldiers relocated from other Romanian frontiers. In a period of a few years while illegal flights from Romania into Yugoslavia increased dramatically (including escapes by military personnel themselves), the border guards brigades went through four processes of (re)organising. A major element in the elaboration of risk analyses at the border had been the latent conflict relation with 'revisionist' Yugoslavia and border guards in the neighbouring country. Neagoe, Tender and Văduva mention that spying operations and missions were organised by both Romanians and Yugoslavians and most often involved illegal crossings. *La borna 203* develops the issue of

spying into a major source of anxiety for both border guards and local populations on the Romanian side who struggle together against the foreign intrusions.

‘The road that used to link the two countries had been closed two years before. It was Belgrade’s fault. The road had become a convenient way for agents of American imperialism – titoist spies – to enter Romania. They came by cars, with valid passports and mysterious suitcases. Some spoke bad Serbian but perfect and subtle English. They were always friendly. One day, cars, passports and smiles all came to a stop against iron thorns. Webs of barbwire were placed across the road. Between the two fences of barbwire the pavement was broken and the ground was ploughed. The place was now part of the ploughed strip along the frontier. On the side of the road there was a coomb by brambles and tall weeds. Many servants of the Belgrade regime were trying to slip away through that place.’ (Jar 1959: 107)

Alexandru Jar’s novel features several cases of spies, some of which are successful in their missions. Some Yugoslavian citizens slip across the border into Romania with the unintended help of Velicu, a peasant, and due to lack of vigilance of Opaïț, the border guard. Armanca (2011) shows that a border guard in this situation was imprisoned and had his benefits cut for a period, which constituted harsh sanctions for a young soldier. *La borna 203* does not inquire in such processes in which soldiers receive significant sanctions. It points instead to the effective self-disciplining of subjects that failed in their duty. In effect, both Velicu and Opaïț compensate their lack of vigilance and manage to stop and detain other offenders of the border regime. By the end of the novel, Velicu, a villager who was at first reluctant with regard to the collectivisation of agricultural private properties, manages to reveal a local *chiabur* who was just about to flee into Yugoslavia and delivers him to border guards. Opaïț, who initially failed to catch a man who crossed the border into Romania, did well in detaining Vlada Dabcevič, the Yugoslavian spy who planned a detonation in a Romanian factory. Both border guard and peasant come in this way to a comprehensive understanding of the border and become competent actors at the frontier, animated by the same struggle against an all present enemy – both inside and outside the country. Similar to *Undeva pe Dunăre*, the process that brings about this pay-off is described as a dramatic struggle of various groups and factions of the working class with the local bourgeoisie, in which consciousness is transformed and individuals become subjects in full consent with the party’s interests and its understanding of the border situation.

Collectivisation of agricultural property lasted roughly until 1962. Part of interventions aimed at facilitating the merging of agricultural lands had been the deportations initiated in

1951 in which chiaburs and other sociopolitical categories of persons were dispossessed of their assets and transported into the Eastern plains of the country, where they received mandatory residence. In *La borna 203*, collectivisation of agriculture, then still in its making, became a process invested with a different meaning. It is mentioned that tensions with Yugoslavia posed barriers to an efficient agriculture in the border area: numerous lands remained uncultivated by private owners. The rural area of the border is described as underdeveloped, yet integrated in a large security apparatus aimed at preventing trouble from across the border. In this context, collectivisation was claimed to be the only solution for the pauper peasants who would then benefit from machinery and higher productivity of their crops. In addition, ‘large fields and collective work are barriers against the enemy. And there will be fewer places through which spies slip in. Let the collective farm spread to the border.’ (Jar 1959: 91) As insecurity and backwardness are direct effects of the border, collectivisation appears to compensate the dangerous proximity with Yugoslavia and creates a new consciousness and alliances between peasants and the other actants at the frontier.

Crossing is also described as legitimate mobility across the border when it concerns the severely impoverished Serbian peasants who want to cross illegally into Romania to escape poverty and oppression by the Tito regime. By acknowledging only a few forms of cross-border mobility, either legitimate or not, *La borna 203* is a reverse portrayal of cross-border flows that obscures massive attempts by Romanian citizens to flee from their country. For example, Armanca (2011) shows that in 1951 there were 72 detainees in prison at Gherla, Romania, arrested for attempt to fraudulent crossing into Yugoslavia. In Aiud, another famous Romanian penitentiary, in 1953-54 there were 29 people detained for the same infringement. The figures indicate that much higher numbers of persons were successful in crossing the border and claiming refugee status in the neighbouring country or other Western destinations. However, to the end of the 1980’s, the number of annual Romanian refugee requests in Austria and Yugoslavia increased were about several tens of thousands.

In *La borna 203*, the tension within the poor dwelling conditions of the Serbian population in Yugoslavia and its connection to crossing into Romania grows progressively in the narrative. It starts from a border event when border guards come to interact with some peasant women from the other side of the ploughed strip. One day at the Romanian picket, some women’s shouts are heard from just across the frontier. Hearing their voices, a few

soldiers approach the border line from the picket's courtyard. They see a few women waving and shouting loudly 'just a little salt! we don't have salt! Throw some matches! Matches!' (Jar 1959: 86)

'Although it was Sunday, the women's clothes were frazzled and their feet bare. From time to time, the women were looking worriedly at the Serbian picket [afraid of the Yugoslavian border guards]. A woman departed from her group, ran a few steps, as far as the border line and made a funnel of her hands, screaming 'salt! matches!' (...) The soldiers immediately understood what she wanted. For some of them, such requests from the other side were not new. Many times, women from the neighbouring country asked for salt, corn flour, bread and other food stuffs. However, it was forbidden for the military to respond. (...) They desired to help them, but also had duties as border guards. A soldier fetched a box of matches out of his trousers' pockets and lifted his arm to throw it across the strip. 'Don't throw! It's not allowed, comrade!' baldly resounded the voice of Panait. In a few quick steps, he caught up the soldier and took hold of his hand. (...) 'You say you're a proletarian and you prevent me from helping people!' The soldier shoved Panait and picked up the box from the ground. 'Put your matches back into your pocket!' Panait shouted at the soldier, determined not to let the soldier repeat his gesture. After a while, he told the others: 'I believe this is the proletarian way! If we start to exchange things across the frontier, different things will also intermingle with us. And our defence goes to waste.' (...) The soldiers were gazing at the women in the neighbour country. A few guards and a dog showed up from the Yugoslavian picket. (...) The women turned their heads and, like blown by the wind, started to run away across the fields. (...) The Romanian soldiers (...) were sad because of the scene just witnessed. (...) Panait laid down in the grass and contracted bitterly. He spoke ardently: 'Because of a few bastards, we cannot really support the Yugoslavian people in a proletarian way!' (...) Firmly, he added: 'Brothers, that time will surely come!' (Jar 1959: 86-8)

Once more exposing the oppressive Yugoslavian regime, another episode describes a border crosser into Romania caught by soldiers in the vicinity of the ploughed strip. The man is a refugee, formerly detained and fugitive from a labour camp nearby Belgrade for participants in the partisan war that opposed Tito and the party after they came into power. The runaway considers that the best choice would be to make it to Romania, which is much more adequate to his political creed and struggle. He is depicted in an examination with the head of Romanian military picket. Besides the story of the man, what is relevant here is the way border guard officer comes to recognise him as a genuine refugee. While looking at the man who arrived 'from beyond', the sergeant recollects various similar cases when the vigilance of border guards was risked for humanitarian considerations. While many of them

were genuine – people who deserved assistance and humanitarian action – others proved to be spies of the Belgrade regime disguised as poor peasants and workers, runaways from prisons and forced labour camps with the aim of infiltration and subversion of the Romanian communist regime.

The question of legitimate flows culminates with a scene in which Romanian border guards help a cart full of Yugoslavian peasants in their attempt to force the border and cross it into Romania. The episode is moving and poses numerous additional questions about performativity of the border and border guards. First, it constitutes an empathic turn, as border guards act against procedures and decrees of the border regimes and help a group of Yugoslavian citizens to get into Romania, although the country is formally closed for them. From this point of view, the border appears as a possibility of exception, although the ideological argumentation behind it – class struggle and predictable victory of the oppressed, both inside and outside – is convergent with the justification of the frontier's 'absolute' closure. The scene, as well as others, reflects the paradox of 1) absolute closure and 2) engaged relationality, and materialises the representation of the border as a bridge, not only as a fence. The border is thus offered the perspective of multiplicity and opening, although these 'irregularities' are not operated through systematic reflection and performativity by the actors involved.

From the observation post just outside the picket, Opaiț looked at the lands of the neighbouring country. (...) Opaiț asked himself several times whether the cart which was nearly one kilometre as far as the border was the objective of observation by the Serbian border guard. (...) He wrote in his register:

A cart with two horses harnessed, in the cart there are things and people; two men mow at a few metres distance. Cart and people are 800 metres distance from the border, close to a country road. A man got off the cart; after he looked at the Serbian border guard, he went up again to cart. Signed, 10 hours and 15 minutes, Opaiț Ion.

(...) The cart advanced some 300 metres to the border. (...) There were 8 people, a few children among them. Luggage was made up of household stuffs, including bed clothes. (...) But they change too fast the place of work!... Opaiț wrote again in the register. (...)

[At some point, Opaiț shouted at his fellows in the picket's courtyard] 'A cart, comrades! It's coming!' (...)

'Let's go to the border line. Quickly, at the ploughed strip! Take up your weapons!'

(...) In a few minutes, soldiers were aligned along the strip. (...)

'Let the cart pass! A Romanian border lieutenant stood up on a ground knoll, ready to run and help the soldiers who would have crossed the strip to help people with the cart. (...) The Serbian guard opened fire on the cart. A horse fell suddenly, hit by a bullet. (...) In the cart, a

few children began to scream and they wanted to jump off, but a woman dragged them down. (...)

Two men got off, looked at the Serbian observation post for a moment and examined the dead horse. With rapid movements, they detached the harness and helped the other horse to rise on its legs, slapping its back. (...) Filimon saw the Serbian border guards running with their weapons to the border. His face blushed, his eyes burned. The other man pushed the cart from back (...) He gasped and gnashed his teeth.

‘Push it! Come on, again! Come on!’ Filimon howled at the Serbian men. He put a hand on a soldier’s shoulder. The Serbian guards arrived at about ten metres distance from the cart. The Romanian soldiers bursted out: they whistled, held their arms as if they tried to move the cart forward faster with some invisible ropes. They kicked and hit the ground with their weapons, in order to hurry the seconds and the refugees. Filimon caught the horse’s mane and dragged it strongly. The cart’s wheels entered Romanian land. He lifted his eyes to the observation post and screamed:

‘Opaiț, gunfire along the border.’ (...) The rattle of bullets stopped Serbian guards a few steps away from the border. (...) They cursed the man from the observation post and got back to their picket. Romanian guards pushed the cart to the Romanian side. Out of the bulk of pillows and covers, a sack of maize, pots, bowls, the faces of some children peeked. The children were frightened and suddenly began to cry.’ (Jar 1959: 151-65)

La borna 203, as well as *Undeva pe Dunăre* describes the border as a place that undergoes the transformation from conflict and disorder to consensus. It also stresses the multiplicity of actors relevant to the becoming of the border object. The socialist realist prose of Alexandru Jar, with its approach to individual heroic action aimed at revolutionay change in the system of oppression allows the anthropologist of borders to clearly understand the mechanisms that set into motion stability and order at the frontier. Opaiț, the young and unexperienced border guard, and Velicu, the suspicious peasant, as well as many of their fellows, become heroes (and powerful actants) in the process of stabilising the border object. At this stage, actor network theory becomes again a very useful tool that disagregates the border object and traces various actions and processes, and their effects. Again, local peasants and border guards, and to a greater degree, the foreign spies, are actants that play a central role and contribute to the final blackboxing of the border. Unlike Alexandru Jar who again wants the reader to retain the simplified consensus that finally characterises the border, actor network theory equipes the anthropologist with the insight of multiplicity and ongoing negotiations of security and welfare at the border. Among processes that lead to the closing of the border, that is, its constitution as an unquestionable and stable entity there is the class struggle aimed at imposing party and working class against their enemies, both inside and outside the country. Another important process that becomes more visible in *La borna 203* is the dynamics of the

relation between border, in its physical and ideological formation, and border guard – a relation that I call ‘bodily transubstantiation’, in which both ‘entities’ become one and produce an actant that comes to surprise and incarcerate the enemy. A similar relation of transubstantiation takes place between the border and local peasants. However, transubstantiation, as a process in which individual subjectivity interplays the border in its physical landscape and ideological manifestations does not produce in this case individual variability in actions, interests, intentionalities, but consensus and homogenisation. Similar to *Undeva pe Dunăre*, the border effects spaces of peasants and guards’ resistance and non-vigilance and, through disciplining, creates predictable political (inter)subjectivity which refuses difference except warring binaries mentioned earlier. In this process of transubstantiation, both border guards and peasants struggle to accommodate the physical landscape of the frontier that provides gaps and opportunities for offenders of the closed border regime. The novel’s characters are often described in laborious missions in which they try to hold control over activity in bad weather conditions or difficult terrain – natural obstacles and barriers to the service of border control and defence. The struggle is not just between people – it is also a struggle between people and nature which is reflected in numbers of spies detained or missed. As a result of these subjective (the ‘inner’ relation of the individual with the border, followed by reflection and individual transformations) and inter-subjective (the ‘external’ relation with other individuals, followed by reflection and individual transformations) developments, the border is once more blackboxed. Analytically, *La borna 203* complicates the border blackboxing process. As compared to *Undeva pe Dunăre*, blackboxing appears here as a result of an effort that is made not only in the domain of dwelling, but also in that of crossing, as the fiction novel develops the question of struggles with the flows of enemies into the country. These apparently separate domains of (inter)subjectivity – dwelling and crossing – will be cumulatively analysed in the next subchapters. However, it should be noted that Jar’s account of (inter)subjectivity of his characters is only partial, as individuals produce through their actions, interests, and intentions a homogenising effect that denies difference and variability. *Iluzia*, another fiction which is examined in the next subchapter, takes the issue of (inter)subjectivity and difference further and makes a case of contestation of the border entity out of it.

10.3. OPENING THE BORDER-BLACK BOX?

10.3.1. Iluzia (The Illusion)

While the proletcult novels by Alexandru Jar describe the border as a world of almost mechanical relations between binaries (such as working class and *chiaburs*, border guards and law offenders/crossers) that progresses to fixation and closure, Lotreanu's *Iluzia* is a different, modernist writing about borders and border guards. Suggesting an interesting debate about the tensions and appropriations of civilian freedom and military discipline, border guards and (cross-border) offenders, it challenges assumptions of the desirability of border closure, although the narrative is dated shortly after the de-sovietisation of Romania (most probably the period 1960-2). In contrast to Jar's fiction, *Iluzia* does not insist on alliances and consensus between various factions of the working class, but rather on difference and dissent between various generations of military and between the military and rebellious 'civilians'. The novel has an autobiographical character, as the author was a border guard himself. The central character, Laurențiu Dima, is a young lieutenant assigned to a post in Timișoara, in which he deals with military and political instruction for the conscripts that go then to the Romania-Yugoslavia frontier for their mandatory service. Like Asandei and Opaț, Dima is also the son to a family of peasants, from a village in Oltenia, in the South of the country. However, there are big differences between them: whereas Opaț and Asandei belong to an emerging working class, Dima is presented as a young officer with aspirations to university education. Always reading books, especially literature and philosophy, his intention is to apply to the university in order to study humanities. This is quite uncommon for his military unit of instruction. His superiors and some colleagues do not understand him, a situation that generates the young lieutenant's rebellion and frustration.

Another important character in the novel is professor Jack Aroneanu, a colourful intellectual who animates a small group of people formed by bohemians, artists, generally young persons meeting in 'underground,' alternative bars and pubs in Timișoara. Aroneanu and Dima meet in such a bar and from then on a strong relationship develops between them.

Aroneanu becomes a 'cultural' broker for Dima, showing him possibilities of a different world and alternative ways to think about himself and society. The young officer receives a series of warnings from superiors who do not agree with the friendship between the military and suspect bohemians. Even more so than Dima, another young officer became friends with Jack Aroneanu and produced a great scandal of military discipline which made the unit decide to arrest and dismiss him. Dima does not experience the same. Yet, there is an intensely dramatic moment in the final pages of the novel in which Jack Aroneanu tries to cross the border into Yugoslavia illegally and Dima is assigned to lead a group of soldiers to chase and prevent the 'offender' fleeing. By the end Jack Aroneanu is caught by border guards. Dima experiences instead a strong fantasy of identification, as well as a strong split with his mentor and friend – a reflection that projects the border as an entity in a process of constant appropriations of institutional roles and detailed instances of intersubjectivity given by interactions between characters, their reflexivity, and decisions to act. Although Dima seems to clarify his institutional role and finds a resolution to the tension between his military duty, on one hand, and his friendship with someone who proved to be an offender of the frontier regime of crossing, on the other, *Iluzia* opens the black box of the border, offering instead a different representation – that of a fluid object upon which consensus is difficult to achieve.

Again, there are several moments in this novel that can show the reader various representations of the border and subjective engagements by central characters with it. The generation of soldiers which Dima was part of were the first to be allowed a critical reflection upon the borders they defended. After more than ten years while the Soviet Union effectively controlled the Romanian borders, those border regimes were transferred from Romania. Dima's contestation of the border is legitimate to a small circle of friends only. A scene depicts a dialogue between Dima and a good friend, Ion Albeanu, also a soldier, when they define the border and its changeable, unstable character. Therefore, a first problematisation of the border is an acknowledgment of its 'conventional' character, recognition of which poses important and difficult questions for those commissioned with control and surveillance.

'I will tell you a secret,' said Ion Albeanu. 'It's a secret we each carry within ourselves actually.' (...) 'We all do things we don't believe in, my dear Laurențiu. You will probably think I'm droll. Because we all wonder... What's a conventional border? We are defending something that could be moved every day. Waters are natural, but landmarks can be moved on variable spaces.'

‘You are confused and bombastic. Come on, let’s go, the buffet will be closed.’
‘You do know the case of captain Oprișan! His company was in charge of raising about one hundred pigs, not defending the border.’
‘He got kicked out.’
‘But how? Do you know what he is doing now? I will tell you. He is the chief of bakers. I ran into him in front of the theatre. He was wearing such a great suit. He was smiling and saying ‘I left at the right time’. That’s what he was saying. Now he’s even going to school part-time – he’s a history major. You two are colleagues. (...) And Orpisan will graduate before you. He’s already in his second year. You have no clue how many gifts he sent to the administration board. A whole lot. It’s not right, Mr. Dima.’ (Lotreanu 1981: 157)

The challenge that Albeanu addressed to Dima was the questioning of confidence in their duty. Albeanu mentioned two aspects. First, the conventional character of the border they defended, from the viewpoint of the changeability of the border line between states. This was an intriguing discourse expressed in the context of a major crisis that border guards had to overcome after the war. As mentioned above, border guards as a branch of the Romanian army were largely affected not only by losses caused by their involvement in the World War II, but also by the politics of sovietisation that shackled their development. Neagoe, Tender and Văduva (2003) show that control of Romanian frontiers had been made unevenly and under the total control of the Soviet army a few years after the war. The shortage of human resources and logistics was huge. Also, the Soviet Union had not allowed the Romanian border guards to defend the Eastern and Northern borders – which made those borders permeable. Organised gangs of Ukrainian people were free to cross the border and, together with the stationary Red Army, soldiers devastated towns and villages for years until 1948. The case of the city of Iași got some prominence amongst other stories. While border guards at Eastern and Northern frontiers were moved further into the inland, the Yugoslavia-Romania border, which was declared an area of emergency on Soviet orders, had largely been in short supply of military troops, although several reorganisations of the border guards were detaching military personnel from other borders to the one with Yugoslavia. Neagoe, Tender and Văduva (2003) also mention some famous cases of indiscipline and even treachery that occurred at the Romania-Yugoslavia border, including border guards and military officers that left illegally to the neighbouring country. In the light of these cases, the border with Yugoslavia received much attention from the army commanders, who were themselves changed very often, and important numbers of conscripts were constantly relocated on the border with the USSR on disciplinary sanctions. Therefore, the South-Western border had not only been pressured by

the context of vicinity with Tito's Yugoslavia, but also by processes of sovietisation of the Romanian army and the constant flux of changes that affected the border guards troops. This transient character of the border in the service of which Albeanu and Dima were assigned stimulated reflection on the fluid nature of the border, its conventionality that can so easily be redefined. Ion Lotreanu, the author of the fiction, introduces this shared experience with the border as illegitimate for a multitude of actors, including superior military personnel who were responsible with the instruction of soldiers in conditions of severe shortage of material resources to sustain the activities of border defence. In the context of so many changes hardly legible to the military personnel themselves, the border was contested by important actors interacting with it from a professional point of view, in their daily activity. The second aspect to which Albeanu points in his dialogue with Dima is the question of indiscipline and 'corruption' within the border guards troops. He recalls the case of a military officer who destabilised a military picket in the sense that they were not preoccupied by the effective control of the border, but rather with producing some material benefits for themselves, superiors and decision-makers in the army (e.g. raising pigs in the dependencies of the picket). Skepticism and relativism develops further in the claim that some of these usurpers of the border guards troops went into university studies and were finally appreciated by everyone, instead of getting punished and resigned from their troops as military regulations prescribed.

This significant dissatisfaction of the young, honest, and idealist individual in his experience with the system grows over time and finds perfect arguments in the interactions with Jack Aroneanu. Dima is presented in various scenes as a partner in debates initiated by his 'mentor.' A famous anarchic claim by Aroneanu deeply penetrates Dima's consciousness: 'the state and I are for now enemies.'

Jack Aroneanu is said to have held different bureaucratic positions in the inter-war period and several scandals and investigations were opened against him. When superiors at the unit of military instruction realise that Dima is under the influence of the notorious Jack Aroneanu, they start to keep a track of their relationship through their intelligence service. Dima has many opportunities to understand that his interactions with Jack Aroneanu are supervised. In addition, Dima starts a relationship with a girl who turns out to be a niece of his mentor. Suspicion grows in relation to Dima, and several fellow soldiers try to warn him about the risks. Dima himself tries to become more 'conscious' of his relations, but admiration for

Jack Aroneanu goes unrestricted. Instead of distancing him from the man who holds intellectual influence on his thinking, the rumours around strengthen, in a way, his rebellious attitude against his profession, colleagues, and the system, as Albeanu anticipates. A critical passage that shows Dima in a moment of truth against those who contest him is revealed in a dream in which the young lieutenant is called to explain his military superiors the strong relation with Jack Aroneanu, as well as his intention to go into university education. On the other hand, Dima is appreciated throughout for his results as an instructor for soldiers trained in the border service. The dream goes like this:

‘I don’t even understand why you called me here.(...) No regulations give you the right to tell me which city district I am allowed to go to. Are you interested in this Jack Aroneanu? Well, I am not familiar with his file, but I have come to know him as a person. He is amazing. (...) You say I am a good instructor. (...) Lately, my brain has also been producing under the influence of this Aroneanu! Good intentions are insufficient. I have been told that I shouldn’t narrow my pants, I shouldn’t renounce the strand that keeps the helmet on my head, I should cut my hair and my whiskers. No one advises me to learn, to be late for the library, to hold my head in my hands and I am wondering what did I do as a human being with an obligation to be rational. Nothing! Jack Aroneanu, who some of you are just hearing about, is an eminence! I am not interested in his past. (...) He uncovered the space of freedom. (...) if you are interested in my situation, why did you postpone my request to sign up to Humanities? Because most of the important officers in this unit studied only a couple of years? I have nothing against them, as long as their ignorance does not come into discussion.’ (...) It seemed to Dima at first that the whole council was asleep, but then he was certain of it. (...) With their heads resting on their criss-crossed arms, the superior officers looked like dunes arranged in a square on a soft ground. Laurențiu Dima went on: ‘Therefore you wanted to save a poor doomed lieutenant! But can’t you see that the old generation... the people with experience... bear the burden of an ancient mentality? They just apply regulations! Orders are laws! But in order to give real orders, one should have a certain stature. (...) I do have the right to look beyond. Barrack regulations are restrictive and illogical. The short book paragraphs with red covers forbid any initiative. (...) You are a generation who defends itself. You want us, the newcomers, to adapt. (...) We’re a generation of pretenders, we didn’t fight in the mountains against the bands of Străvrescu, and we didn’t tremble in the barracks of the Western frontier. (...) You are very interested in the situation of the citizen Jack Aroneanu. Especially things concerning his influence upon the lieutenant Dima. (...) There is no influence. The problem is within me. Nothing can be done at this moment. Nothing. How about we start with you? What are you waiting for, from the border? (...) Wrong-doers with gifts well wrapped? How many pigs, how many potato bags, how many turkeys, how many eggs are sent to your residence?’ (Lotreanu 1981: 211-3)

References to the old generation of military officers are rich and well articulated throughout the writing. In different moments, Dima and other officers in the border service

make explicit claims about the unfortunate decade of sovietisation of the army, when Romania had to enforce measures against Yugoslavia, a country with which a friendly relation had always been in place before. This split between generations takes the form of a symbolic struggle over the meanings of the border and reflected the ways in which the Romania-Yugoslavia border appeared as an undetermined and imprecise object of knowledge and intervention. The presence of Jack Aroneanu in this anti-soviet cosmology in the making at the border brings additional arguments and positions, constituting a major source of subjectivation for young border guard officers like Dima and others. The apex of this struggle over representation is the scene where Dima has to face the evidence that Jack Aroneanu wants to leave the country and become, as he insistently claimed, a 'free person'. In that morning, Jack Aroneanu is reported to have left his residence to try to cross illicitly the border into Yugoslavia. Dima is notified about the escape and, together with other lieutenants, appointed to organise a few groups of soldiers to intervene and chase the runaway. Dima is in shock at the news. He starts the day as a responsible lieutenant whose duty is to catch an offender of the Romanian border regime with Yugoslavia. The troops head to the border in the areas where Jack Aroneanu is supposed to hide and find his way across the land border. After searching various sectors, the troops disperse and Dima remains with his soldiers to search a particular area. They approach the border. As it is wintertime, they advance awkwardly through snow, searching forests, bushes, hills, river beds etc. From time to time, they stop to halt in the snow, to drink and eat in order to warm up their bodies. On one break, Dima falls asleep and experiences a strange somniloquence in which he meets Jack Aroneanu and the man talks to him.

'I'm a victim of my own inner freedom. Just focus on the mission. I couldn't stand it. What business with forests? Those are fairytales. The demon is here'. And he pointed towards his chest and his forehead. 'I can't miss it forever! Just one moment of life and then the void... A force pushed me towards the fields, towards the forests, now in the middle of winter. It's my life's adventure. Only my body can be stopped because my soul has already reached its destination. Mr. Dima, do not be upset! I have entered the service of an estranged power. Estranged from infamy and humiliation. I am not a mystic; I have no patience to see what's in the next life. In there, maybe the conventional borders are missing'. (Lotreanu 1981: 281)

First, this dream anticipates the defeat of the runaway. However, it is Dima's turn to intervene. His speech leaves the reader with the impression that the resolution to Aroneanu's

attempt to cross the border is not simple at all, and that he, a military officer appointed in the defence of the border, oscillates between performing his professional tasks straight away and helping the offender of the border regime. As Aroneanu's fantasies of escaping and becoming a free person are very similar to Dima's, the dream suggests that the border's capacity to separate is illegitimate. Questioning the desirability and legitimacy of sovereignty claims embodied by this border, it is the social relation and the intersubjective moment that dereifies the former. The scene can be interpreted in a sense that the relational takes over the conventional, the rule-bound border regime. Dima dreams that he is saying:

'Professor, that way, please, what you're looking for is just over there! Don't be afraid, the river with willows on its banks is frozen, so you can cross it with a tank. (...) I have orders to facilitate your advancement in the empire of absolute freedom.' (...) one could hear the noise of the Coon trumpet which the musician from Tehnolemn had brought along. The instrument divided the forest into two, crushed trees and among the open woods the troops were sliding on their skies to a lake that shun in the distance, in another country, in another world.' (Lotreanu 1981: 282)

Waking up and continuing their search, Dima keeps on imagining the paradox of detaining Jack Aroneanu, his friend, mentor, and uncle of his girlfriend. Denial of evidence that he is chasing Aroneanu is a permanent temptation for Dima. Trying to convince himself about the 'reality' of the mission, Dima refuses to imagine the situation in which he would need to shackle his mentor. Then, Dima fantasises about the professor asking him permission to cross. Dima's response is 'here you go, professor!' The lieutenant finds himself unable to think and act operatively. Although continuing the mission, his thoughts are desperately refusing the situation. His imagination oscillates between the traumatic image of Aroneanu caught and bound by soldiers and his career and status within the profession and the army. Lucid reflection on his personal situation and the role Aroneanu had in his formation are again stifled by growing anxiety about the event of seeing the professor immobilised. He imagines that others can detain the runaway, not himself, and this thought comforts him for a while, until Dima tries to convince himself, again, that Aroneanu is not there, trying to cross the border, but most probably sits in his library, reading, writing, preoccupied with his daily routines. For a moment, Dima, in his delirious state, is unable to assimilate the image of the professor as an offender of the border regime.

‘Therefore, Jack Aroneanu is around here somewhere, hidden until dusk falls.’ The only hope of the young officer was that the old man was somewhere not in his sector. Only the idea of his soldiers arresting and bringing Jack to him was darkening Dima’s mind. (...) He had a question on his mind: ‘What would I do if I had Jack Aroneanu in front of me?’ The questions seem brutal, senseless, naïve.

‘Officer, it’s Jack Aroneanu. I want to enter the empire of freedom. You have the bread and the knife. Get out of my way. The necessity and not the accident took me here, you know. What is your decision?’ (...)

‘Here you go, professor.’ (...)

He couldn’t imagine Aroneanu running through the snow, hidden under a hood of frozen cobs or maybe lying in a ditch – the same professor with his hand above his head, sitting at a table, saying words full of symbols, never bland or boring. (...) ‘No, it can’t be, professor Jack Aroneanu isn’t in these wild fields, on the edge of this melting forest, which doesn’t even seem real. He has no business here with the foreigners, his weak old legs won’t serve him and his eyes aren’t accustomed with empty planes and bleak darkness. Aroneanu was safely inside his library, with his arms resting on the table and skimming countless books.’ (Lotreanu 1981: 284-9)

Finally, Aroneanu is caught by a different lieutenant and, all of a sudden, Dima appeases his anxious feelings.

Iluzia is in many ways a different writing from *Undeva pe Dunăre* and *La borna 203*. First, it opens up the possibility of diverse, often antagonistic subjectivities. In the first place, Dima, in relation to his own psyche and significant Others, finds himself rebellious against the troops he is part of, older generations, border regimes, Soviet influence etc. At the same time, he partly realises that Jack Aroneanu is the major source of his anarchic subjectivation. While chasing Aroneanu in his attempt to illegal border crossing, Dima struggles with himself, experiencing strange sentiments which reflect his own split in subjectivity. In the end of this struggle, Dima succeeds to remove identification with the offender of the border regime and the temptation of betrayal from his position of border guard officer. The final lines can be read as a special experience of the young lieutenant – an illusion of separation from his abject otherness, to use Kristeva’s (1982) words, a failure to recognise it. Basically, Dima fails to recognise the unconscious offender and military traitor within himself. His ideal is the integrity of the self placed in a unequivocal relation to the border and his duty. However, Dima’s ‘true identity’ remains a disappointing identification with the Other, and an experience with the Imaginary, a falsification of the conscious side of his psyche, in Lacanian terms, whereas his rebellious attitudes and contestations were swallowed by the Symbolic, the unconscious register (Gutting 2002). The border thus provides the stage, in this context, for

complex intersubjective dynamics, actions and feelings that were overlooked in Alexandru Jar's writings, whose frontier with Yugoslavia was homogenising and purifying, an area of consensus and interpellation by the class struggle.

Lotreanu's novel opens a critical debate about crossing and cross-border flows. Whereas flows were almost absent in *Undeva pe Dunăre*, *La borna 203* concentrates exclusively on cross-border flows enacted by the Western-cum-Titoist intelligence interests into Romania, incorporating issues of crossing into an anti-flow rhetoric. *Iluzia* considers crossing in the opposite sense – the intriguing massive flows of so many Romanian citizens who constantly crossed the border illegally into Yugoslavia, since the beginning of sovietisation in the 1940's, until 1989. On the other hand, the dimension of dwelling is represented in Alexandru Jar as a mere utopian vision in which a superior social formation struggles and succeeds to reach consensus, thus closing the border both physically and ideologically, as an object of knowledge. In contrast, *Iluzia* takes dwelling as a debate, as a site of contestations, and considers it the object of (inter)subjective reflection. *Undeva pe Dunăre* and *La borna 203* claim indirectly that subjectivity and subject-formation are unquestionable, they posit an one-way possibility of interpretation, following the binary sociopolitical world the fiction novels describe. In *Iluzia*, Aroneanu's sentiment of misfit and attempt to force his freedom across the border with Yugoslavia, so subtly transferred to the border guard lieutenant Dima, indicates multiple and strong relations between dwelling and crossing in the context of the border. This conceptual relation and its spatiotemporal significance will be explored further in the next ethnographic section, following a selection of fieldnotes and interviews collected during my fieldwork at the border.

Finally, *Undeva pe Dunăre* and *La borna 203* describe the border as an entity in a process of successful black boxing, or punctualisation. Both Asandei and Opaiț, along with their fellows and local communities they are related to during their border work, do really know what the border becomes in the end. Their knowledge and experience 'close' the border and take it for granted, thus reifying the border regime and overcoming any disruptions by (inter)subjectivity and political contestation. On the other hand, Dima, Albeanu, Aroneanu, and other characters in *Iluzia* end up rather confused in the wake of a long debate which reveals serious dilemmas and contestations of the sociopolitical formation they were part of. Dima, as a young military officer at the border, seems not to adhere to the border-object. By

assuming that Aroneanu's attempt to flee across the border is an infringement of the border regime, Dima acknowledges the closure of the border from a conventional viewpoint and is compelled to consider the evidence. Yet, Dima cannot represent the other 'closure' of the border – the frontier as an object for once and for all, the frontier as a black box. Rather, his story is a premise for opening the border, in the context where it is physically closed.

Iluzia takes the reflection on the border as an entity a little further. The border as an actor network fully stabilised, marked by consensus, starts to be contested. The floating and changeable meanings that coexist within the main characters of the novel – often as an unconscious material of (inter)subjectivity – introduce the need for an interdisciplinary approach where psychoanalysis is considered a valid tool to unpack various processes that destabilise the border-object. *Iluzia* makes clear that the way in which the border object is constituted is a matter of relationality at very different scales of inquiry and that the (intimate) relation between the individual and the border as an actor-network/an entity in its becoming is of primary importance. This approach is explored further in the next subchapter.

10.4. THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF THE BORDER-BLACK BOX

This final chapter continues the ethnographic reflection on the border from the perspective of its closings and openings, both literally and a-literally, and investigates the possibilities of blackboxing from the point of view of the subjectivities of the borderlanders I worked with. Unlike the earlier accounts from the three works of fiction, this chapter proposes an examination of the situation in which the border opened for many Romanian borderlanders after the construction of the Iron Gates dam in the 1960's. It also produces insights about the border during the period described by Alexandru Jar and Ion Lotreanu in their writings (late 1940's to early 1960's). Besides the general goal, the chapter follows the retrospective stories of my respondents in relation to two spatiotemporal metaphors – 'dwelling' and 'crossing' – connected to various ways in which the border subjectivated¹⁴ and transformed them into political actants in their everyday life. These ways include changing physical landscape of the frontier.

¹⁴ In the sense of Althusser's *asujetissement*.

An underlying assumption is that dwelling and crossing are ingredients to a great deal of everyday practices and subjective engagements at the border. They are available mechanisms through which persons evaluate their lives. Another assumption is that present or absent (once present) landscapes are in a relation of transubstantiation with the people who dwell or cross the frontier in a sense that the landscape is an actant that generates practical and emotional experience processed in the constitution of the political subject. People reactivate their memories of the places that disappeared and this encounter produces various subject positions with reference to the border.

The major spatiotemporal reference of my respondents in the Southern part of the (river) border – a milestone in their lives – was the building of the Iron Gates dam in the 1960's and 1970's. This implied massive relocations of the population and resulted in a different landscape of the Danube, with a number of localities flooded – either they completely disappeared (like Ada-Kaleh, Vârciorova etc.) or settlements were rebuilt in different places (Orșova, Eșelnița etc.). Even if both the Romanian and Serbian sides were transformed, I will concentrate on the Romanian one as this has been far more affected in terms of number of people and localities who were expropriated and moved. Another important reference that will run through this subchapter is the process of massive deportations from the border to the Eastern part of Romania in the context of the nationalising of the private property in the 1940's and 1950's.

Using notions of dwelling and crossing, this chapter will deepen aspects that appeared in previous chapters – 'flows' and 'control'/'surveillance' – and place them in the spatiotemporal subjectivities of the borderlanders. The notions of dwelling and crossing are able to establish deep correlations between subjects and everyday politics at the border, and point out the ways the border, and borderlanders took shape through their everyday (inter)activity. Politics is hereby treated as engagement with 'the existence of multiple processes of coexistence (...)' a type of relational politics based on the 'the negotiation of relations, configurations.' (Massey 2005: 147) This everyday politics based on the multiplicity of coexistence implies various degrees of consensus and contestation that allow us to highlight the border's blackboxing or the undoing of blackboxing process.

10.4.1. Building a dam on the Danube

Before the World War II, even in the absence of a built infrastructure over the river, crossing the Romania-Serbia border occurred in different forms. Village fairs on each side, tourism, family visits, and smuggling were all occasions to cross. The existence of Romanian and Serbian-speaking populations on both sides of the Danube has long been a typical motive for enduring social relations across the river and legitimated movement for the state and borderlanders. As of the pre-World War II period, Macedonian tobacco, salt, or live animals were carried by boats navigating across the Danube when the border was almost unpatrolled.

After the World War II, with the escalation of restrictive border regimes in the early Romanian Workers' Party expansion, the Romania-Serbia border became very difficult to cross. Illegal flights were for years the only possible ways to cross the border, even for borderlanders. It became virtually impossible for many years after the war. The border was consistently militarised and scenarios of war were permanently fed by 'stalinist' propaganda fighting against the revisionist Tito. Along the entire border, on the Romanian side, a barbed-wire fence, few meters high, existed so late as Stalin's death. In 1951 there were massive deportations (around 40,000 people) from border localities into the far Eastern area of the country (Cernicova-Dincă 2003). Targetted as potential enemies of the party state and conspirers with the Yugoslav power and its capitalist allies, those people forced to move and leave behind their properties and assets were used as a resource for the local nationalisation and collectivisation of agriculture. Also, they provided a cheap labour force in the Southeastern plains where the economy was already non-functional as properties of the big local landlords had already been seized and nobody was working on the vast agricultural lands left (Marineasa, Vighi 1994; Bercea, Ianăși 2010; Sarafolean 2001; Milin, Stepanov 2003).

The context in which crossing became permissible to some extent twenty years later is of crucial relevance here. Around twenty kilometres upstream from Turnu Severin lies the small town of Orșova. From Orșova further into the West, the Danube used to be quite narrow until the early 1970's. The landscape was different from today, with a few more islands on the river. However, it was massively transformed, starting in the mid-1960's, as relationships between Yugoslavia and Romania relaxed and facilitated a joint economic project involving the Danube – the construction of the Iron Gates I dam and hydropower plant. As a result, the

Danube was drained on particular sectors for a long time and was turned into a huge construction site that attracted a considerable labour force from all over the country (Grasu 2002; Rusu no date; Roman 1980; Copcea 2002; Copcea 1985). Consequently, people from a number of localities, including the old town of Orșova, Vârciorova and many others – the majority on the Romanian side – were relocated (Juan-Petroi 2006; Rogobete 2006). Some islands on the Danube, including the Turkish-inhabited Ada-Kaleh, were flooded and disappeared in the growing water basin for the dam. The Danube was thus generally widened, while a new infrastructure for crossing was put in place at the same time. The Iron Gates dam-bridge was opened in 1972 (and ten years later Iron Gates II, further South, followed). Since then, besides being a very profitable company, it has been working as one of the major border-crossing posts on the border, and also one among the most strictly controlled (Armanca 2011).

After the opening of the bridge, Yugoslav citizens started to come massively to Romania, especially into Drobeta Turnu Severin (where an open-air place was called the ‘Serbian market’) to retail products unavailable to common Romanian citizens. Since the early 1950’s, when Yugoslavia departed from the Soviet Union and opened borders with its Western neighbours such as Italy and Austria, Yugoslavs started to cross various frontiers for purposes of tourism-cum-smuggling (Mikula 2010; Taylor, Grandits 2010). With the opening of the bridge, borderpeople from the Romanian side started to cross into Yugoslavia too, but their local authorities cautiously and selectively issued cross-border passes for them. However, crossing, and subsequent suitcase smuggling, started to penetrate the lives of border pass-holders. Although cash and goods getting back across the border into Romania tended to be strictly checked by guards, the movement produced to some extent a sort of petty capitalism in the Romanian socialist border cities. Crossing developed massively in the 1990’s (Gornoviceanu 1991), to decline gradually to the present day (Radu forthcoming).

10.4.2. Before the dam

In this section I introduce a few respondents through their retrospective narratives, mainly about the period that preceded the dam. The respondents remember significant aspects of their lives at the border, as well as their perceptions in relation to the landscape the dam transformed significantly later.

Ilie¹⁵ is a man in his 50's living in Schela Noua, a district of Drobeta Turnu Severin. He was born in Vârciorova, a village which was flooded for the opening of the dam. His father worked at the National Railway company, but had also been heavily involved in agriculture and hunting. Before the dam, the landscape around their house had been a mountaineous one, with forests and rocky cliffs which enabled residents to go fishing and hunting, rear animals and engage in some agricultural work. After working several years at a manufacturing shop on the Ada-Kaleh island, in the 1960's, his mother became a housewife woman caring of the four children and household. Ilie recalls with nostalgia that they had a large household with a lot of people and animals including pigs, goats, sheep, oxen. Like many others, their house and garden were very close to the Danube's shores, which made the cliff a very different landscape as compared to the one encountered today. The displacement of people in Vârciorova started in 1968. Two years before that, Ilie's parents had started to build a new house but they stopped in 1967 due to the rumours of displacement.

'In Vârciorova we reared our own animals and were not waiting to get food from others, or from the state. We had seven or eight sew all the time and we were often slaughtering piglets. We were not waiting to rear them for one year. The sew were free to go pasture wherever they wanted in the forests. In the evening they came back home. The same for the small piglets. Milk, cheese, home bread – we had it all. We also had our own brandy, and plenty of wood. Really, it was a different life then. We lived much better in Vârciorova and everyone here from those displaced would tell you the same. But now the places we remember are just water'.

It is important to understand that, while remembering the idyllic Vârciorova, Ilie speaks of present, future, and past altogether. The narratives collected during fieldwork are retrospective and this aspect will be made clear throughout the subchapter. In the context in which occupational prospects, interactions with the border and the opportunities it offers, and my respondents' lives, in general, are marked by dissatisfaction, the past is generally interpreted in its idyllic form. However, it is interesting that, as the stories of my respondents progress, they revert back to the past and various aspects of their lives at the border. What are the aspects Ilie misses so much about Vârciorova?

¹⁵ All the names of my respondents have been changed.

‘Even at my age I have a special sentiment for those places. I was born in those places and I lived beautiful years at the Danube. And I loved so much those mountains and forests and the ways we were used to live’.

Ilie has never gotten used to Schela Noua, the district built in early 1970’s for the displaced persons from Vârciorova. As he worked several years in Germany after 1989, his sentiment of longing for home was invariably linked to Vârciorova. He often goes fishing at the Danube and sits in the waterfront close to where Vârciorova was 40 years ago.

‘If I stop on the viaduct I can throw down a pebble right in my housegarden – and this is a good thing’. If Ilie drives or stops on the viaduct he recalls his childhood. *‘My childhood is there under the water and I think this is something I will think of even in my time of dying’.* The landscape was very different then, wild and beautiful, and it was something closely associated with the river in its naturalness. In contrast, Ilie told me that the Danube is very different now, a dirty industrial site, consisting of stagnant and uncleared water resembling a lake. The transformation of the landscape corresponded, for Ilie and his family, a radical change in life. Peaceful and abundant subsistence was transformed into a precarious life, as they moved into modular residences and were incorporated within the party-ruled mode of production, which excluded the previous way of life. Scarcity and centrally-organised distribution of goods and resources brought by the dam and displacement generated a particular perception regarding the border and its landscape, a feeling of dispossession which gave way to contestations of the massive building and its political patronage by the party state. Different spatiotemporalities were at work for Ilie, and others, in relation to the dam. In precise terms: life had been different not only before and after 1989, but also, and most importantly, before and after construction of the dam. In interaction with familiar landscapes which are now gone, Ilie and other people have become subjects of lack, as Lacan would state (Laclau 1977). This lack involves an aspect of economic subsistence, as well as a political component that will be made clearer in the next paragraphs. Landscape is engaged with the everyday practice. It is not just natural and static, but rather mobile and transformable (Tilley 1994; Lefebvre 1991). It is not just something one looks or gazes at, but it is something made and remade in everyday activity (De Certeau 1984; Massey 2005; Anderson 2008). As landscapes change, the human activity within them might also transform. As landscapes disappear, human action previously conducted might continue, or disappear. However, the landscape, as the

familiar space that catalyses one's existence, relations, emotions and actions continues to live in one's own mind even if absent, and it is sometimes engaged in practice, as Ilie goes fishing to the place where once Vârciorova was. The landscape, even if absent, has the power to generate presence, thus bringing the past into the present.

Ada-Kaleh, the island that faced Vârciorova, is also a strong memory for Ilie. It was so peculiar as the Turkish inhabitants were experts in home-made, or industrial products uncommon for the mainland: candies, icecream, marmalade and preserves, tobacco and cigarettes, clothes for the army etc. Turkish children from the island were coming to school in Vârciorova and Ilie made friends with them. Also, between Vârciorova and Ada-Kaleh there were numerous economic exchanges: islanders were in need of wood, live animals, cheese, meat, and agricultural products, while the others were interested in fruit and home-made Turkish products. Their relations were continuous and constant. As his mother worked there, Ilie paid five visits to the island. Besides these apparently peaceful relations, Ilie recalls that Ada-Kaleh was strictly defended and militarised, even more so than the mainland. Every 50 meters there were military posts.

Between the two world wars, Ada-Kaleh was renowned for its 'duty-free' transactions. Also, islanders had crossed freely to Serbia to retail their products. This history of small monopolies on various products and commodities, and their free circulation across the river had changed after the World War II. Adnan, a Turkish man in his 70's, recollected that change had been harshly imposed by a 3-meter rod fence erected to restrict the view of the Yugoslavian river bank. The same fence had been erected along the Romanian mainland and it stayed there until mid-1950's.

Son to an important islander, Adnan and his numerous family were about to be forcibly deported into Bărăgan in 1951. However, they were well connected to the new authorities and learned that they were shortlisted for mandatory residence in Bărăgan just in time to leave the island and change their place for Caransebeș, far away from the border, where they could not pass as suspects for deportation. Half the number of families had been deported from the island. Not only rich families were forced to move into the Eastern part of the country, but also poor anglers or boatmen suspected of smuggling and connections to the other side. His father and older brother found employment in local factories in Caransebeș. In the mid-1950's, when deported persons were allowed to go back, they returned to the island.

In Ada-Kaleh, Adnan opened a small restaurant, as entrepreneurial activity was allowed for a period. There were plenty of ships mooring at the island – numerous tourists and customers for the restaurant. Life on the island had been marked by two aspects. First, it was a quiet harmony that the islanders maintained even after deportations. On the other hand, even if the Romanian-Yugoslavian relations were improving, there were still controls and military all over the place.

When I asked Adnan to describe the landscape of the island, he told me that the island was *'fortress, trees, and houses.'* *'It was a different life then, on the island: we drank water from the Danube, were surrounded by waters, we all knew each other...'* In this way, Adnan's memories connected me to a construction of a good balance they had between natural and built landscape, and the apparently perfect symbiosis and lack of differentiation between human and natural. The rumours about displacement and relocations for the dam's construction came in 1964. First, they were offered the option of moving to the Şimian island that faces Turnu Severin. Yet, the locals turned this option down. Adnan, along with many others, also had the option to move to Turkey. He stayed a short period in Turkey but returned to Schela, which is also his current residence, as they could not adapt there. Other islanders moved to Turkey permanently. Many moved to Constanța, Mangalia, Bucharest – all over the country where Turkish communities were in place. State support with the operations of moving was poor, and the compensations almost non-existent as authorities had no resources to set into motion such a large process of displacement. In effect, islanders and many other displaced from other localities had to manage themselves. In order to build a new house in Schela on a plot of land they had to buy from the state, Adnan brought construction materials from their old place in Ada-Kaleh, transported by boat. In the long period while the island was slowly flooded, Adnan visited Ada-Kaleh regularly for his brick transports. Ironically, on a visit, he met two Turkish families who were there to flee to Yugoslavia. They succeeded. By 1973, the island was completely under water.

Esin, a 70-year man, is another Turk from Ada-Kaleh. He reminds his big surprise at the news about the prospective flooding. The flood was planned while the island was flourishing. They had recently renovated roads, and a developing infrastructure for incoming tourists. The peak was between 1965 and 1968. For Esin, it was a period that resembled the good inter-war period his parents and older brothers had told him about. Just as he talked

about his good life on the island, Esin mentioned that the 1950's were deeply traumatic for the whole border population. Related to the 1950's, Esin's childhood memories are linked to a permanent feeling of isolation materialised in the wire fence put all over the island's limits, and the strict ID controls which adults were exposed to every day. In the 1950's, border guards and local authorities were the real governors and absolute masters of the island, uncommon for the people of Ada-Kaleh, who were so used to be in control of their destinies in the past. After 1947, the authorities had a constant concern with illegal flights across the river, which, in spite of all restrictions, kept occurring, both on the part of the islanders and of visitors.

'We were permanently told that the Yugoslavian border guards would shoot us from the other side. We had no real freedom of walking the streets of the island, and we were forced to go to sleep at 10 o'clock in the evening.'

Yet, when it comes to the things Esin and his wife miss after so many years from their relocation to Orşova, it is the island itself and the peace of the landscape. Their current nostalgic recollections of the absent island contrasts with the moment when they were forced to move to Orşova – a moment of hope for a better future, although very difficult. The relocation to Orşova was invested with expectations by islanders as authorities promised them modernising their lives, offering basic facilities – electricity, running water, roads etc. – that were largely absent on Ada-Kaleh. Yet, the state did not accomplished their expectations.

'They did not give us any place to live, I had a little child, and I lived one year with my parents. And they did not keep their promises regarding the dam – free electricity and all the rest. It was very hard.'

In addition, the beauty of the island's natural landscape had been replaced in that period by huge and chaotic construction sites. *'Imagine – everything was a site. A very ugly one.'* Above all, because of in-migrating labour force from all over the place, the population of Orşova increased dramatically, making the town rather unsafe, according to Esin. After all those rapid changes, the materiality of the island was only indicated by the water whirls on the river.

'They did not manage to demolish everything, and, after the flood, the undemolished buildings on the island were underneath the waters but still made the water's surface curl. And we knew that was where the island was, because of the curling.'

In agreement with the actor-network theory, we note here that human intervention of the state sovereignty claims produces non-human actants, in this case the river in connection to the disappearance of Ada-Kaleh, that continue to act in conditions of material absence (of the island and its built environment). This sort of absent presence, or partial materiality of the island, indicated only by the water curls produces in turn various narratives and actions by the former dwellers of the place. Although starting a new life in ‘modern’ conditions (in the newly built blocks of flats of new Orșova), Ada-Kaleh takes precedence in the islanders’ imaginations of the border. More precisely, the island activates, or produces a nostalgia of legitimate and peaceful dwelling opposed to the border places as they were after transformations operated in landscape. It is important to see here that the state is not the direct activator of these imaginations of disappointment with the place, which means that the state, although an important actant in the process, generated other different actants that mediated its actions and became more visible to the individuals relocated. The state as an actant in the border-network, an actant that changed dramatically their lives, in rather negative terms, became to a large measure invisible to people for that reason. Creation of thousands of jobs on the dam’s building site, the new facilities and regulations for crossing into Yugoslavia, and the relatively high standards of living in the area in the 1970’s contributed to this invisibility. Although the state became a sort of invisible actant, the island and other places that were flooded continued to be experienced as powerful presences and, in a way, as actants that effected practices and imaginations of the borderpeople, including individuals who had no direct, long-term relation to those places. These aspects will be developed later in this subchapter. Referring to the blackboxing processes discussed in previous subchapters, here the problem seems more complicated. In fact, the state as an actant that transformed directly the border and its landscape has rather complicated the process through its actions of flooding, expropriation and relocation. Former dwellers of the places affected by floods developed strong positions and contestations against the new dwelling areas, while at the same time, they retrospectively idealised the lost ones. This dissatisfaction has been poorly compensated through other facilities provided with the building of the dam (such as crossing). In some cases, as we will see later more clearly, the immateriality (and disappearance) of the places was itself an object of contestations, Ada-Kaleh, the old Orșova and other localities taken away by water being regularly present in dreams, conscious memories, material testimonies

such as books, photographs etc., and often asserted as essential to one's own life and social relations. Therefore, there are two important aspects to note further about the process of blackboxing of the border, or its becoming a clear-cut entity. First, the construction of the dam had a major effect of multiplication and production of new, unexpected actants that derived directly from the processes initiated by the state. Second, these actants prompted unexpected attitudes and processes of subjectivation at individual and group levels in relation to the dam's project and its consequences. As we will see later, these positions did not necessarily antagonised people and state, society and control apparatuses, but created differences and cleavages between dwelling and crossing practices, memories of places and landscapes, and imaginations of the border in different periods. In other words, whilst examining the retrospective narratives of borderlanders, the border appears as an entity marked by difference and lack of consensus. The premise of undoing the border-black box, analytically and ethnographically, then becomes possible.

Interesting present evaluations of the good life in place before the dam also came from Nelu, a 70-year man born in Balta Verde, a Southern village at the Danube, to a rich peasant family. Before the World War II, there had been an intense 'contraband' trade and economic exchange between Romanians and the Serbs across the Danube – a completely uncontrolled commercial activity. Nelu's father had also been involved in it. He was buying salt and lamp petroleum from Drobeta Turnu Severin for his Serbian Vlach customers and he was receiving golden coins in exchange. There were frequent marriages between people from different sides of the river.

'So, there was no border then. They were coming to us by boat, and we were going to them, also by boat. We were visiting each other at weddings, they were coming with the fiddlers here. It was very beautiful.'

According to Nelu, the existence of a conventional river-border until 1947 had no effect on the 'natural' life carried at the Danube, except during the war. Nelu points out to the invisibility of the border as remembered from his childhood, but he emphasises a lot of material practices that were carried out across the border, between Romanians and Serbian

Vlachs¹⁶. In this context of invisibility of the border as a practical, effective delineation, we may say that the border was an empowering frontier effect (Donnan, Wilson 2010), an enabling positive influence in the borderlanders' lives. The advent of border guards marked a brutal enforcement of the frontier which affected directly the peaceful relations between Serbian Vlachs and Romanians. As Tito and Yugoslavia turned their back to Stalin, an aggressive anti-titoist campaign started in 1949 on the Romanian side. The material effects were the ploughed strip at the Danube's shore to indicate a place that once had been accessible, but was now suddenly forbidden to everyone. Then, the border guards installed military units for their brigades, and they erected a high barbed-wire fence. *'From good friends, the Serbians became our worst enemies. And it was interesting that many people actually started to speak badly of the Serbs.'* The advent of a border visible for everyone was accompanied by restrictions: they were no longer allowed to angle, or to swim in the river. Local peasants were affected economically by the harsh enforcement of the border. Until 1949, the locals had hunted sheat fish with spears and had absolute freedom to bring their animals to pasture at the Danube. After the border guards arrived, the peaceful dwelling practices suddenly ended.

The presence of border guards at the Danube had been followed by a long process of collectivisation of private property, including large areas of agricultural land. In relation to this aspect and the whole situation of emergency at the border, the massive deportations came in 1951. Serbians, Macedonians, Germans, rich landlords, local administrative and political staff, smugglers, Bessarabians – all were deported as anxiety about collaboration with the regime of Tito, and counterrevolution, was growing. Nelu's family were also deported. Experience of deportation is recounted by almost everyone in terms of forced dispossession, slapping, corporal punishment, violence carried by the military in cooperation with the local authorities. Around 40,000 people were thus transported to the far Eastern part of the country. As they were relocated, they built new settlements from nothing, on the land seized from other landlords who were forced to leave from there. The politics of mandatory residence which they had all been subjected to prohibited their travels farther than 15 kilometres from the

¹⁶ Romanian speaking population living on the Serbian side of the Danube, as well as other inland areas of Serbia. When my respondents referred to the Serbians, they largely spoke about Vlachs, with whom they always had excellent connections in all areas of life.

imposed place of residence. For that reason, numerous children could not go to schools, while adults were employed in factories and farms in the proximity.

The experience of the border's marking by the ploughed strip and wire fence was also a common place in the conversations I had with Petre, from Orșova. The strip of land had been all along the Danube's shore, 7-9 metres width and it replaced the old corso, the promenade walk at the river, making of it a forbidden place. Border guards were brought from afar, they were junior military who, so Petre said, knew only that if they shoot or catch someone trying to flee, they would be rewarded. The border fence existed in Orșova between 1949 and 1956, and was still left in place along roads between localities long after 1956. The corso in old Orșova was given back to the locals in the 1960's. However, the oppressive presence of the military continued and became a constant of the everyday life at the border. Even from the beginnings of the militarisation of the border, 'groups of friends' were formed with border guards, in which propaganda representatives taught the locals how to divulge information on those who planned to flee. After 1956 excursions on the Danube were organised, and there were many people who used the opportunity to jump off boats and flee to Yugoslavia. For that reason authorities introduced high-speed ships where passengers were kept closed in a cabin. Armed border guards were always present on ships but there were still people who jumped.

Another transformation that overlapped the building of the dam was the administrative regionalisation of 1968. This materialised into a general disruption of the place, a massive numerical increase of the population, industrialisation and partial depopulation of rural areas. In the 1960's, Turnu Severin, as Nelu recollected, still was a patriarchal and conservative place. It all changed dramatically starting in 1968: from 35,000 dwellers, in a few years Severin had reached 120,000. On the building sites at the Iron Gates alone there were 12,000 workers. Regionalisation affected Orșova as well. Numerous institutions, including the Administration of the Iron Gates were moved to Turnu Severin. The old Orșova had been perceived as a strong town before, especially because of its harbour. The dam and the new regionalisation changed the hierarchy of localities and created frustration as the development of some towns and villages was rather stagnant.

A few aspects can now be added. From a phenomenological perspective, as part of one's life and recurrent activity, landscape is embodied in a way it becomes a central part of one's own subjectivity (Ingold 2000), it is both inside and outside the subject and its body

(Merleau-Ponty 2002; Atkins 2005; Heidegger 1971). In this chapter, political subjectivity emerges in interaction with the changing landscape, as well as more directly through specific actions of enforcement of the border in the post-war situation, due to particular feelings that such transformations might produce, from familiarity to non-familiarity, from attraction to repulsion, from compliance to resistance (Lefebvre 1991). These changes did often produce economic deprivation for the locals, deprivation that was coupled with numerous restrictions in personal liberties and rights, that were largely seen as illegitimate, as they made a strong contrast with the borderlanders' lives as of the inter-war and pre-war periods. The dam that was just to get built was largely perceived as a different local landscape at the river-border, a landscape with wide and large ramifications in other processes that occurred there, such as regionalisation, industrialisation, expropriations and relocations. Built landscapes do sometimes represent naturalisations and materialisations of political power (Mukerji 1994, 1997), although it is not always the case. Through the built landscape, the state and other forms of power may produce, subject positions and promote uniformity of feelings, ideas and actions. However, consistent with the psychanalytical idea that the subject is split and never fulfilled, borderlanders displayed a wide range of positions. This lack of a homogeneous response is a characteristic inherent to processes of subjectivation (Butler 1997). The subchapter also showed that the drowned landscapes at the Romania-Serbia border do sometimes live with the subjects and articulate various attachments to dwelling and crossing practices, with different spatiotemporal references. Evaluations of the past confronted with assessments of the present and expectations and hopes for the future offer a vast site in which political subjectivity takes form and navigates along the border itself.

10.4.3. After the dam

This chapter will continue developing narratives of my informants in relation to the construction of the dam and other adjacent processes.

Getting back to Ilie from Vârciorova and his experience of displacement, it is interesting how he evaluated the dam. His assessment of the situation is common to so many people who passed through the same experience of displacement, to whom familiar and easy dwelling was refused.

'I've only seen this dam negatively. It affected us in many ways. They took our houses, they took everything, they threw us in this neighbourhood, they gave us so little to build new houses. All in all, they changed our lives. In exchange, they promised we would never have to pay electricity. And there were a few other facilities. But nothing happened. On the contrary. We've been here for 45 years. Look at the way we are living now. Look at the holes in the road. You won't see that even in Breznița, up on the mountain. There, they have concrete. Our neighborhood is forgotten by authorities. And we pay high taxes. This is the uttermost outskirts. And, we, the folks in Severin, see ourselves lower than Breznița, which is 15 km away. And Severin used to be a powerful city: we had here a factory of industrial energy supplies, a chemical plant, wagons etc. Now, there's nothing.'

When Ilie refers to the power Severin had, he thinks of the post-1968 period, after the regionalisation, when the population of the city grew four times more in a few years. That was a period when re-industrialisation of the area and the intense crossing prompted by the Iron Gates bridge stimulated a sort of petty capitalism out of the suitcase smuggling carried out by both Serbians and Romanians. The municipality had also been receptive then to the new commercial opportunities and set up various places in the city for retail trade of goods from across the border. One such place was the so-called 'Serbian market'. Although many border crossers were industrial workers with good salaries who could afford going to Yugoslavia by car and purchasing goods from the market, there were many other opportunities open to those who were not crossing. Many people bought Yugoslavian goods to resell. Crossing stimulated a lot of 'entrepreneurial' activities in a socialist period while private room of manoeuvre had usually been very limited. *'Everybody in Severin used to love smuggling.'* Ilie recalls that there were a lot of young people who did not want to work. Rather, they tried to smuggle. There were a lot of people selling on the streets, even if they did not have something properly set up.

However, one makes sense of this satisfaction with life and the cross-border trade by contrasting it with the dissatisfaction with dislocations of population and other actions by the party state and the actants, human and non-human, it produced in the process. While joy was connected to opportunities prompted by smuggling and crossing, at times deep dissatisfaction was connected to the living conditions. Dwelling was defined by my respondents as a fixed political situation at the border – a context in which people could not intervene much to improve their situations. The continuation, realisation, and 'mobilisation' of everyday politics were mediated by practices and imaginations of crossing. Crossing opened the eyes of

borderlanders, and enabled contrasts and comparisons between the Romanian and Yugoslavian sides. Different generations had different concerns and lived in diverse border regimes, but the permanent temptation of crossing the frontier cut across periods. Crossing and small trade increasingly fell beyond the party-state's control, as dissatisfaction with dwelling was directly stimulated through interactions between individuals and the coercive party-state and various other actants in border-network. Subjectivity produced by practices of dwelling and crossing was a constant force of generating an everyday politics of contestation. An important spatiotemporal referent through which politics came to occupy the subject was the landscape and its transformations.

Ilie stated that he never belonged to Schela.

'People have no work here. People live off day labour. Everybody runs off outside the country. Especially young people. Even me, before autumn comes, I'll be gone again. What can I do here?'

When he looks at the disappointing neighbourhood, he immediately recalls, in contrast, of his good childhood and youth in his family house at the Danube, in Vârciorova. Ilie was never involved in constant crossing, neither before, nor after 1989. He tried it and found that there is a lot of jeopardy in it. Yet, Ilie made an interesting comment about crossing as it is carried out in the present.

'People go to the border with cigarettes now, they take a chance, but it's not worth it, as far as I'm concerned. When people don't have anything to do, they need to do something.'

This illustrates very well the place of crossing in a context with no proper job opportunities. On the other hand, crossing has clearly been stimulated by the dam, and it probably offered the only compensation for the loss of properties and the familiar in their lives. Ilie told me that the small cross-border trade was the only memorable good thing about the dam.

'A lot of people here have led a good life (before and after 1989) just because of the small trade across the border. Some bought houses, cars etc.'

According to Esin, Orşova is another disappointing place nowadays as many have no employment and look to leave. When it comes to thinking of the post-dam socialist period, Esin says that *'we were hopeful and in a way we achieved what we wanted: we got houses, flats, jobs.'* But reciting the achievements soon reminds him of the lost place of Ada-Kaleh: *'If we had the island, I think it would have been full-blown by now,'* that is, they would have had a much better life on the island now. The good prospects they had upon relocation were also related to the growing liveliness of the place. During the construction of the new Orşova, the town was, like Severin, inhabited by colonists, workers from all over the country. The life they knew in Orşova then, although many times disruptive and dangerous for those familiar with the old town, is completely absent now, when Orşova appears very much as an abandoned place.

'Orşova was first abandoned by minorities, Germans in particular. They received money from Germany, so they were allowed to leave. The Hungarians also left, this happened in the 1980's. But others came after that from all over the country. Now Romanians leave the country as well. If you go around Orşova, you don't see too many young people. Everyone heads off outside the country.'

If in socialism Esin and his wife did not go to Yugoslavia for the fashionable small commerce, they started to cross regularly after 1989. Esin's brother-in-law was a police officer and he continuously prevented him from getting a crossing pass before 1989. He was fearful and wanted to avoid any problems for his relative. This was the tendency amongst those with good authority positions in socialism – avoiding doing things openly as there could be risks for their positions. However, Esin crossed the border frequently after 1989. They used to buy cheap stuff from Orşova, go to the other side and sell it. *'As we had a few days off so we went. We made double profits.'* Although there was some freedom of movement to Yugoslavia from 1972, the cross-border passes were selectively issued. It was only after 1989 when the borderlanders could take full advantage of the dam. Constantin, a 50-year man from Orşova, reminds that

'only then we realised what low standard of life we had. We were free to move around. We realised that we kept everything bottled up inside and no one knew what we were feeling. Because we couldn't talk. We were afraid.'

Until 1989, but even after that, though in different forms, sentiments and fantasies of permanent control and surveillance continued. Before 1989, to go to the Danube's Clisura¹⁷, north of Orșova, one needed permission by border guards and *Securitate*. The area was known for frequent attempts to flee. Towards the end of the 1980's, the number of successful flights was around 40-50,000 every year, recorded in the various locations where refugees from Eastern Europe were concentrated temporarily (Armanca 2011). Some people succeeded to flee for a good while using their cross-border passes to Yugoslavia. This was one of the reasons why papers were so selectively approved and issued. From my conversations with a former policeman who worked at the Division of passports before 1989, the first passes were issued in 1962-63, just before the start of the works at the dam. However, many more passes were issued after the opening of the bridge, in the early 1970's. Issuing a crossing pass (valid 5 years with the possibility of a 5-year extension) was a laborious job for policemen who tried to find out as many things as possible about the applicant. These included their genealogy, details about family and household etc. in order to decide whether that person can be an eligible crosser or not. Applicants who received passes quicker were those who were married, employed (especially industrial workers – peasants received passes to a much lower degree) and those with no political involvement in the family's last generations.

Let me get back to Constantin, from Orșova. He never went to Yugoslavia before 1989, but for apparently different reasons. Constantin occupied a leading position within the local party hierarchy. Although the construction of the dam and relocation to which he was subjected had subverted his loyalty to a considerable measure, he still uses a particular 'socialist' rationale against crossing. He says he has always been a real patriot so that he could not try to take advantage of small smuggling across the border. In addition, he has a lot of police and *Securitate* workers in the family. He associates the small trade with the factories being robbed and the transportation and selling of materials into Yugoslavia. As he reminds me, many border crossers have done that.

'Those who went into this lacked character. They made a fool out of us. Those who knew how to make real trade ended up real bosses today. That's where it all started.'

¹⁷ Narrow, mountainous sector of the Danube's flow between Orșova and Moldova Nouă.

Although he did not cross the border, he says he would have done it if the context would have been safer for him. In his fantasies of crossing no money was involved, but a drive to freedom, as he explained.

'Freedom, that was dearly missed, the freedom to cross the Danube whenever I wanted. Orşova was a very beautiful tourist city, we could have tasted civilisation much better.'

Crossing appears here not just as an individual achievement, but a collective emancipatory aspect which was lacking so much not only for Constantin, but for many people at the border. Today, there are thousands of borderlanders dealing with small cigarette smuggling facilitated through bribes to border policemen and customs officers. In border towns and within the control institutions there is apparently complete understanding for this practice of crossing.

'People do not do it to get rich, as they will never get rich from that. People are desperate and when they are desperate they are allowed to do everything that can sustain survival,' as Nelu from Turnu Severin told me.

Among the numerous small smugglers in cigarettes I met during my fieldwork there was a poor woman, Ana, living with her old mother in Turnu Severin. Her only income was from cigarettes. She got fined by the local police two times in 2010 because of her 'illegal' job. Many packs of cigarettes were also seized from her by the police. She had no cash to pay the fines and even if she would have had the money, she said, she would not have paid it. For five years now, small smuggling is her only stable occupation. Another woman, Mariana, a bartender in Severin, sells cigarettes while she is at work. Her son, Marius, an unregistered unemployed youth, manages to get her cartons of cigarettes according to orders she receives from the bar's customers. Her business is for subsistence only, as she sells largely on credit and there are a lot of debts around her. Mili, owner of a bar where a similar small smuggler comes regularly to retail cigarettes, told me that the only motive of police and patrols' high visibility in town is the contraband cigarettes. The picture is much larger though – as there is a complicated relation between those who pass the cigarettes through customs, those who sell them in the city, in bars or other public spaces, border workers who let the cigarettes pass through the border checkpoint, and local policemen who hunt petty traders dealing with the cigarettes in the city. Mili is right in asking: *'Why on earth do they let the cigarettes come into*

town? What happens in the customs?’ Mili considers that only seizing cigarettes in the border post could make the work of patrols in town effective. Otherwise, the whole issue seems to be created and maintained by those who should stop it. However, in the recent period, cigarette smuggling seems to decrease as the Schengen accession¹⁸ and austerity measures taken by the state as response to the debt and public expenses crisis dispossesses people gradually of their jobs and external controls become harsher with petty smugglers.

Let us return to Constantin and his self-assessed honest dwelling without crossing. His rejection of crossing is apparently explained by the theft and suspect morality involved in cross border trading. Yet, the dam was deemed as an additional referent in this, which, on the other hand, did not prevent him from fantasising about ‘freedom’. In relation to the dam, Constantin has also some open complaints.

‘When electricity in our flats was shut down, it was the most awful time of my life. After so much suffering with the power plant and the dam, after we were promised free and permanent electricity... And power was cut in the factories as well. It was a paradox. They said we would have it all. Nothing. Lies. Betrayal. And they used to take us for voluntary agricultural work. They promised us stuff but they did not deliver anything.’

Similar evaluations come from Petre, also from Orşova.

‘From 1980 to 1989 I did not sense the dam. Ironically, on the Romanian side of the border, the powerplant itself was cut from electricity [specifically meaning that it was not supplied with electricity during the night]. While driving along the river, there was complete darkness during the night. We had no facilities as they promised, the power was shut down every day.’

This statement is of crucial importance as it comes from a person who had been actively involved in the propaganda for the dam. In addition, Petre and his family were subject to relocation, forced to leave their house in old Orşova for a smaller flat in the new town. In spite of these events that could affect his relation to the party state, Petre became one of the important local people of the apparatus – responsible for organising cultural activities supportive of the party. During the construction of the dam, and even before, Petre had been one of the key persons in town, whose task was to educate population for the coming of the

¹⁸ Schengen accession for Romania and Bulgaria, although still pending, is affecting jobs in the sense in which some companies prefer to move their businesses outside the area of security constructed at the Schengen borders, thus creating loss for local labour force. Accession to Schengen also involves the reduction of border policemen and customs officers through relocation or diverse forms of lay-off.

dam through conferences aimed at explaining the advantages of electricity, radios, fridges, TVs etc. Constantin and Petre from Orșova are illustrative for the deep transformations of subjectivity. Their ideological convictions have been subverted and even turned upside down in the context in which they evaluated their harsher conditions of dwelling that contradicted the promises that accompanied the controversial construction of the dam and plans for displacement. Their statements can be supplemented by many others coming from some border guards, for example, who, in the mid-1980's, when external debts caused serious shortages in Romania, were slightly more permissive with regard to attempts to illegal crossings. In their retrospective narratives, all these persons set themselves in contrasting positions: defenders of the system and victims of their own design, in different periods until 1989. These examples from respondents illustrate well the ambiguously perceived presence of the state as an actant in the border network. Whilst favourable to the party and its actions in some matters, which were sometimes related to the official criminalisation of crossing and trade across the border, these people remained ardent critics of their everyday dwelling marked by deep consumer shortages and the presence of the dam, especially in the 1980's. However, the state is not necessarily perceived as responsible for the borderlanders' disillusionment with dwelling. As mentioned in a previous section of this subchapter, the dam, its construction and direct consequences in the everyday life is somewhat dissociated from the party state. It appeared as an autonomous actant. Many respondents did literally refer to the dam as a centre of intentionality and action that significantly affected their lives. Although a creation of the party state and regional/cross-border socialist economy, the dam as an actant was an effect of multiplication within the network, at its turn producing other actants that affected people even more directly.

An interesting case of subverted and transformed political subjectivity came from a former and actual border guard from Turnu Severin, Ciprian, who told me about an interesting encounter he had before 1989 with a person he caught when trying to cross the Danube. The intriguing aspect about the encounter was the reflexivity into which Ciprian was forced. During the investigation, the 'offender,' a medical practitioner from Sibiu, did not answer properly, but only asked questions. The officer realised that, as a representative of the state, he should have been able to answer the man's questions. Actually, he realised that he himself had a lot of questions and contestations to address to the state. Many of the contestations were

similar to those of the illegal crosser he managed to catch. *‘When were you last time in a hospital to see the conditions there? What did you see then?’ ‘When were you last time at a play? Do you remember, really?’ ‘Have you ever listened to Europa Liberă? What did you learn then?’ ‘Is there any book you managed to buy from a bookshop recently?’* These were counterquestions the offender posed in order to make the border guard realise the motives for his decision to leave the country that way. *‘There was a spiritual connection between us, on the limit of betrayal’*, Ciprian told me. A strange communion was established between the two: the man of control/border guard and the ‘illegal’ border-crosser, a connection which was also previously described when analysing Ion Lotreanu’s *Iluzia*. Ciprian tried to help ‘the illegal’ crosser to avoid imprisonment. In practical terms, he advised him to write his declaration this way: *‘when I approached the Danube, I saw the water’s turmoil and width and I decided not to flee, so I changed my mind’*. Ciprian’s case of symbolic betrayal is not isolated. Luca, a border guard in his 50’s, has also reported me that towards the end of 1980’s he became increasingly aware that the ‘frontierists’ were right to plan their escapes.

The examples above show cases of antagonism and difference within the state apparatus itself. The anti-dam and shortage-related narratives produce repositionings of subjects and threaten the stability of the border as an intended clear-cut entity, or a network with clear centres of power and interests. The disavowal of the state as an actant within the network and its subversion at subjective and inter-subjective levels, the marked difference between dwelling and crossing are strong arguments for the idea of multiplication and diversification of the actants within the border network. These are also illustrations for the anti-statecentric position expressed for the anthropology of borders in a previous theory subchapter.

10.4.4. Dwelling and crossing

This section takes the retrospective narratives of my respondents further and develops them in relation to two ethnographic and analytical notions dealt with throughout – dwelling and crossing.

An important aspect that needs to be mentioned here in relation to the dam is that, until 1989, it politicised the everyday life at the border to a degree preceded only by deportations

and the coming of border guards in the late 1940's, and it accentuated the negative effects of the 1980's consumer shortage as people were promised all sorts of facilities associated with the dam which were in fact not delivered. One medium of this politicisation was the landscape. The landscape people perceived changed dramatically in interaction with building sites, large numbers of colonists, and demolished, abandoned, or rebuilt parts of the river, towns and villages. This politicisation through multiplying the spaces for social relations was well illustrated in an account by Nelu from Turnu Severin.

The dam was presented as a grandiose feat, and a whole journalistic and literary movement started to promote the dam and the new world to emerge through it (Copcea 1985, 2002; Grasu 2002; Roman 1980; Rusu no date). Nelu was part of that movement, as a journalist for an important party's gazette. He wrote about the dam in terms of a '*citadel of light*,' a '*bridge of light*' – a great accomplishment by the state, socialist economy and society. This was not just a reproduction of the official creed but, as he suggested, it was also his sincere expectation for the future.

'We were happy because the gigantic construction was being built. A cult of work was flourishing here, construction workers were highly respected at some point. I was bewildered by the transformations that were happening around me.'

The multitude of construction sites were astonishing and dynamic. Every day brought something new, everything was transforming quickly. Every day new equipment would show up, and something went missing – maybe a hill, maybe a mountain. The Danube itself was drained and the shores of the river were quickly changing.

'At some point I got lost on the construction site even though I was there from the beginning. It was a hundred hectares long, including the living spaces. It was like seeing the genesis of another world, the genesis of light, as the water was turning into light. An earthly tectonic controlled by man who could have seen himself as a demiurge.'

The Iron Gates site was an immense conglomerate, as there were many construction sites, actually – an entire universe. People used to work 10-12 hours a day. Also, there were people who died there in work accidents. For example, when they were drilling a mountain to build a tunnel, 30 people died as they were working underneath the rocks and a huge cliff fell on top of them. But, as Nelu, continued,

'nothing can last without sacrifice. And, as you asked me about Ada-Kaleh, the island with the backward Turks living there was a necessary sacrifice too.'

Though not easily representable, the new world came up as a deep antagonistic force against the backward and simple life to which people were used at the border.

'A while back, fishermen used to fish among the weeds, on the water, but then we saw the 24-tonne turbines with hundred of pieces being assembled.'

In addition to this technoscientific spectacle of transformation of nature, the party set into motion a large plan of employment for the rural labour force. They offered well-paid work to thousands of people from villages. A common worker at the dam made roughly three times the wage of a high-school teacher. The administration of the Iron Gates used to send recruiters in villages. The recruited were unskilled workers who received quick training on jobs. *'They were coming to the site wearing only a few clothes, they didn't even know what it meant to shower,'* Nelu made me aware. In addition, they received benefits such as clothes, houses, bonuses etc. For Nelu, the construction of the dam was *'a huge step towards civilisation: from their straw mattress back home to a real bed and modern furniture.'* In this context, Turnu Severin grew fast and most of the people stayed.

The construction of the dam and the river's new landscape were glossed through stories of those who worked there – particularised as heroes of socialist construction. The dam lived very much through the people who worked at it, who had a unique opportunity to become founding characters of an impressive creation. They were often referred to as *'creators of landscape,' 'artists of nature's transformation.'* *'They entered the mountain's entrails,'* as Nelu imagined them. The newspapers often made famous people out of apparently common workers. For example, this was the case of a blacksmith who worked on the entire metal structure of new Orşova. In turn, as Nelu recalls, people were proud that they did important work for the dam.

In contrast to this picture, there is a different subject position which still antagonises the transformations. The relations of the former dwellers of Ada-Kaleh with the island in the wake of the dam are illustrative. Adnan told me that:

'I always dream of it. When you know something disappears before your eyes, something you cannot see anymore, it is very tragic. Only people who went through this know the

feeling. Some men wept because they knew they were never going to see the place again.'

The dream of such people is to materialise their place, their familiar landscape. The desire to see the island, or other lost places, including old Orșova or Vârciorova, was expressed by many. When Adnan worked at a coffee house in Turnu Severin, after the opening of the dam, he often passed by with his car and he always looked for the island, but he could only see the plain waters of the river. He confessed that at times he imagines that the level of Danube will decrease and that he would thus be able to see the island. The island is 40 meters below the waters now. Adnan continues saying that *'the island was like my wife and child, or it was a parent to me, nothing can ever replace it.'* The same feeling is recounted by Esin. *'When I'm on the road, near the island, I always try to find it.'* It is not just his personal effort to rematerialise the island – media people often come and ask him questions for radio or TV reports.

'I'm a rarity, many have died, I am the only one left. On one of these reportages I went to the place where the island once was, on the water, to tell the story. The reporter phoned me on the same day my mother died years ago – she laid buried on the Șimian island. And she is still there as the cemetery was not based in Schela yet.'

Esin considers that his sentiment about the island is a painful intimacy, and he told me he frequently declines participation in media reports.

'For a year, everything I dreamt of was myself on the island. I often dream of old friends from there. Situations in which I worked. For example, the minaret for which I did renovation work and they destroyed it with dynamite. They used a lot of dynamite to put it down. It was so strong. A lot of my friends died and I often dream of these persons.'

In his intimate relationship with the island, we find something that refuses representations from the outside, official images of the island and its former dwellers. To a certain degree, the lost materiality of the island leaves its former dwellers with certain memories and representations of the island, but also with a large non-representable material. In relation to this, we need to mention that there are different practices of recollecting the island. For example, Adnan prefers to communicate rather official images and discourses about the island, including history, folklore, everyday life issues, all described in a romantic version transmitted through pictures, books, letters from his personal large collection. He does

a form of dissemination with apparently little emotional investment. In contrast, Esin is not interested in these forms of communication. In addition, although both Esin and Adnan reactivate Ada-Kaleh through dreaming, Esin seems to take this issue more seriously. Dreaming the island is a way of remembering and reinventing the island in one's own, subjective terms, as much as it is used as a claim of an intimate relationship that is only fragmentedly shared with the others. Esin ironically told me about an Austrian student who visited him. Technically speaking, the student wanted to learn more about the island, but he actually knew more details about it, as compared to Esin. It all culminated when the student showed Esin some photos from archives. In one of the photos there was Esin with his grandmother! – a picture that Esin did not have in his personal collection. Interestingly, he even told me that *'I am a quasi-illiterate about the island.'* There are many things about Ada-Kaleh which Esin asserts no interest in. Yet, his attachment to the lost place is dramatically intense. Engaging with different forms of testimony, Adnan reinvents the island as a form of preponderant technical knowledge that provides easy visual representations of the lost landscape for him and others. On the other hand, Esin, in its reinvention of the lost place does primarily produce a non-representational form of knowledge about Ada-Kaleh. Much more than seeing it, Esin feels the island in the absence of material testimonies.

It is not just the island that is missed and fantasised about so much, but also the Danube itself – the river as a space of dwelling and crossing. The Danube is no longer the same river after the construction of the dam.

'The Danube was very clean before – I used to drink from it. Now it's a mess because of the dam. The river has grown wider and the water is rising. The Danube was more beautiful back then. The Danube was a flowing stream back then. Now, it is a dirty lake of accumulation, growing and flooding everything around, year by year, as it has not been cleared for more than 20 years.'

From the friendly natural and built landscape as they knew it, the Danube is now seen as a threatening and uncontrollable presence. Esin is very nostalgic about that lost dwelling. *'I would have loved to keep on living where I was born. If the island wouldn't have been under water, I would have surely been living there today.'*

The same nostalgia exists with regard to another border place – old Orşova. Constantin recalls that:

‘It took us 5 years to move, and moving was a sort of collectivisation. They asked you if you wanted to move, but in fact they were forcing it on you. You had no choice. ‘Get out of Orşova, at 12 o’clock everything will be flooded!’ – they were screaming through megaphones. This was around 1971. And all my childhood got flooded, everything was under water in an hour tops. I simply couldn’t believe it.’

Constantin saw the water coming towards the town. He still remembers a church being flooded, the very same church he was baptised in as a child. Reflecting on the issue, Petre told me that nostalgia for the old town still lingers in all people living in Orşova except those who did not live there before the flooding. It is, however, a big puzzle and curiosity to the younger inhabitants.

‘People of old Orşova never dreamt of themselves in the new town. I often dreamt of myself in the old city, finding my old friends, old places, or seeing the water swell. I’ve been living in the new town over 40 years, but I still dream of the old one.’

Petre suggested me that his dreams would have probably had a different object if living conditions had been different.

‘It was decent until the 1980’s. Then – the decade when we did not have electricity in our flats, when we had no food, although we were told we had one of the most productive companies in Europe near our town.’

It is again important to note here that my respondents speak to this ethnography retrospectively. Their present accounts on past emotions, actions, intentions are mediated by numerous external actants, but also by subjective engagements with their everyday life, past and present, including memory’s selectivity and levels of distress. In some cases, dissatisfaction with the present (being unemployed, or about to get laid off, or being unhealthy) or accentuated emotional states such as nostalgia for friends and kin, lost places, social relations, leisure activities, or occupational opportunities influence their discourse on the past engineering into the border landscape, or other issues. In a way, articulating narratives in the present about past events do work as compensating and ‘justice’-making opportunities for my respondents. Yet, this possible instrumentality of narratives does not preclude the validity of constructed discourses. On the contrary, it reveals that narratives provide different evaluations, intriguing articulations of political subjectivity and descriptions of processes from which they were generated.

From the stories about the construction of the dam, crossing and dwelling appear as different, yet related modes of subjectivation. They form a productive context of political self-becoming and intersubjectivity, a way to create border spaces and temporalities in the form of events and narratives on events that turn out to be evaluations of my respondents' own lives. Many accounts above refer explicitly to the border space once materialised as a familiar landscape, and then radically changed. Landscape has been complied with or resisted against by people, and formed both the conditions and outcome of border remaking. As my ethnography shows, this outcome is yet imprecise, contested and lived in different forms. Imagined rematerialisations of the old border landscape and the refusal of representations from 'outside' (like in Esin's case of engaging with the lost island) are proofs that the border is an object of contested knowledge, an impossible black box, in spite of powerful actants and attempts of punctualisation prompted by the construction of the dam, strict restrictions to crossing, or the authoritative party state. It is important to note here that processes of subjectivation under the influence of various actants in the border network are decisive to our idea of the impossibility of the border black box. It is the level of one's own subjectivity and its inward or outward dimensions of relationality (the intersubjectivity level) that brings flesh and bones to the human and non-human powerful actants, and their effects, which are sometimes rendered visible as frontier effects (Donnan, Wilson 2010). Subjectivity and intersubjectivity, 'ordered' by dwelling and crossing practices and imaginations in the narratives of my respondents, allow the analytical disaggregation and tracing mentioned earlier. Resulting diversity, multiplicity, lack of consensus and a significant deal of dissatisfaction and political contestation lead us to conclude the impossibility of constitution of the border into a clear-cut, stable entity. The border, as we will see further, is a permanently changing and sometimes incoherent entity, both analytically and ethnographically, in my respondents views.

Also, the diversity of spatiotemporal referentialities internalised and used by my informants in their assessment of their relations and situations is intriguing. Actants that backed transformations often remained outside the control of my informants, and in this way became metaphors for the indeterminacy of life itself. In their narratives, the border appeared as an actor network remaking itself several times over decades, yet, an actor network which had little to do with my respondents' decisions and willful agency. Deep antagonisms in relation to the isolation and brutal defence of the border, deportations, dam construction,

floods and relocations, regionalisation, produced a site of ongoing transformation and a productive context for everyday and official party politics. Yet, as noted earlier, antagonism with processes and actants within the border network occurred in conditions of relatively low visibility of those actants. From this point of view, it is difficult to assert centrality or significance of an actant or another within this network as far as they were constantly changing, supporting or undermining one another, and multiplying into various other actants. As these subchapter shows, the ethnographic examination of narratives of lives at the border is crucial in understanding the border entity's complex dynamics and its incongruence with 'official' representations and discourses within the frames of strict territoriality, sovereignty, or fuzzy concepts such as that of culture. This can be a cumulative suggestion for the anthropological study of borders which is already focused on processes and becoming, rather than fixed acting entities. Furthermore, using the actor-network theory in the anthropological study of borders, as this thesis does, supports an approach that does not take the issue of black boxing for granted. On the contrary, the approach is based on the problematisation of constitution, emergence and relationality between actants of different size, power, or influence. Also, it focuses on questioning the coherence of their actions and projects, and their effects in the everyday life of borderlanders.

This formation of political subjectivities is paradoxical and fragmented though. As revealed in the ethnography, my respondents may refer and evaluate objects of their everyday life differently, according to the spatiotemporal context of relations. Esin mentions the enthusiasm he initially manifested in the perspective of their relocation from Ada-Kaleh. Life on the island had been tough, rudimentary, while relocations opened new perspectives and promises for a better life. Yet, his position in the present is completely different about the island – he wants it back, he would live there if possible, the dam construction had produced a long-term sentiment of disown, which was not compensated by the opening of the border and its intensive crossing, especially after 1989. The various spacetimes of his relations and life can not be put together, their reconstitution seems impossible for Esin. His crossing and dwelling practices remain sequences of shifting subject positions that elaborate either manifest or quiet everyday politics. Taking the particular case of Esin, or any other respondent I introduced in this main chapter, the border as an actor network can be analytically traced

through actants that sometimes become visible through practices and imaginations of crossing and dwelling they produce in the borderlanders lives.

In spite of the deep dissatisfaction with dwelling and dispossessions, controls and surveillance of all kinds, there were people who engaged actively in supporting the authorities and the border guards in identifying potential flights to Serbia. One of my respondents who had connections with such people is Petre. *‘There were many informers. Even I myself was constantly visited by a man from Securitate who was asking me to report on friends and acquaintances.’* Petre also recalls that the informers were part of the local population. Some were people subjected to many restrictions; some were ‘friends with border guards.’ In particular, as Petre told me, there was a young man from Orșova, a mentally disabled person, who thought himself a border guard. The soldiers fed and clothed him. Their service meant a lot to him and he offered a lot of information on suspects.

Another good example of how persons became paradoxical (acting and reacting) subjects in relation to the frontier is Nelu. His family, as mentioned above, were deported to Bărăgan in 1951, where they spent four years and six months. They came back, but their houses in Balta Verde, their village of origin were occupied by the local collective farm, as a result of the local collectivisation of agricultural properties. So they moved to Turnu Severin, where Nelu went to high-school. If he had ever mentioned that he had mandatory residence in Bărăgan, he would never have gotten into highschool, as selection was very politically oriented. But his father was a good worker at his new job and occupied a mechanic’s vacancy at the local public transportation company. Therefore, Nelu had a good and credible certificate. Still, his application to university in Timișoara was rejected, even though he handled the written examination quite well. By mistake, he filled in his autobiography with real details, including the experience of deportation. By disguising his past, he managed to get into an institute for primary school teachers in Craiova. Then, he was assigned as a primary school teacher in a village, Jidoștița. Years later, he entered university in Bucharest. Because there were not many literarily talented people around, they made him a local party member and hired him at *Viitorul*, in Turnu Severin, a powerful newspaper run by the party. *‘If I would have written bad things about some director, I could have removed that person from his good post in three days. It was a great power assigned to me.’* At some point, he was kicked out of

the party organisation, on the allegation of immorality when he divorced and remarried an engineer. A friend helped him return to his old teacher's job.

'That's where the Revolution caught me. After 1989 they made me a high school teacher, then I was a member of the county's council, for 5 commissions at the time, under the Ecological Party and the Social Democrat Party. I, who was deported, hung around Iliescu, a bolshevik (laughing).'

The above stories reveal a politicised border in which crossing and dwelling give different meanings to one's own life. Dwelling has generally been understood as peaceful grounding of one's existence, an autonomous and depoliticised category of subjectivity (Heidegger 1971; Ingold 2000). My case explores a different kind of dwelling though – one that does not elude struggle and contestation – a process of making a political subject. Dwelling, in this understanding, is not necessarily part of the individual spatiotemporal choices. Ilie, Nelu, Petre, Constantin, Adnan, Esin and all the others are persons who were transported in various spatiotemporal relational contexts to which they developed various narratives and counternarratives, resistance and compliance with powerful actants that aimed to transform their lives. In their dwelling at the Romania-Yugoslavia border they were accompanied by sentiments of insecurity. For some of them, crossing, appears as a practice that did not necessarily compensate the bitter sense of dwelling. Further fantasising has then been produced, especially in the context in which crossing, as a practice or imagination, offered them an opportunity to critically consider 'concepts' of 'place' and 'dwelling' in relation to their personal situations.

As revealed in the narratives of my informants, there were processes that altered the sense of dwelling at the border. Among these, the border enforcements of the last decades, including harsh border regimes with selective crossing authorised at some point, or deportations linked to nationalisation of property in the 1940's and 1950's, and forced displacements and changes in landscapes were of primary influence. Illegal flights of people trying to escape into the West across the border, massive labour migration to Western Europe after 1989 and general urban abandonment in the area came to complement those processes and indicated the uneasy relations that individuals developed with the place. In addition, the Romania-Yugoslavia border has constantly been marked by unemployment and poor industrialisation, marginality and poverty of local populations, mainly involved in angling on

the Danube. Dwelling has further been dramatised through the long history of crossing and relations between the Romanian and Serbian border populations that produced an antagonistic and anxious sense of living with the place. Therefore, dwelling is for many a hopeless condition of being left there, with no opportunity and little expectation for the future.

An aspect that struck me during fieldwork was this dissatisfaction with current lives. One of the few things that made many people happy were the ‘escapes’ to the Serbian town of Kladovo that faces Turnu Severin from the other side. They went there with friends and family and spent afternoons at pubs and terraces, or on the local sand beach. These trips to Serbia were enjoyable, but also accentuated the bitter taste of dwelling in their town because of their perceptions of differences and asymmetries between Romania and Serbia since the opening of the dam in socialism. Their Serbian neighbours not only smuggled Western goods to them in times of shortage, but opened the horizons of their reflexivity. Until 1989, meeting Serbians at the marketplace in Severin, or going to Kladovo or Negotin, on the Serbian side, were occasions for reflection upon their own condition of subjects of an increasingly intrusive and aggressive state apparatus of control and surveillance. Through contrasts, they offered opportunities to appreciate and envy the liberties and wealth of the Yugoslavian citizens authorised to travel and work in Western Europe since the 1950’s.

Although this internalised asymmetry strengthened the sense of disappointing dwelling, spending time with petty cigarettes smugglers during my fieldwork, I noticed that those people did not complain much about their life in this place. Although involved in a risky activity which does not necessarily bring them considerable cash, under permanent attempts at regulation and surveillance in the border post as well as in the city, they seemed to be rather content with their mobile condition. Moreover, many of those who did not smuggle, would very much like to, having a fantasy of a better life through smuggling.

Dwelling at the border is a mode of non-belonging and placelessness (Seamon, Sowers 2008) compensated through crossing and various contestations which make and politicise the subject and the border as a topographical and imagined spacetime. The urban reconstruction of border towns and cities since socialism is also a practice that stimulates further (critical) reflexivity upon dwelling and subjectivation. For example, Sorin worked in the urban planning office at the municipality of Turnu Severin before 1989. He told me that the Danube was only selectively accessible for the common dwellers of the city. This was not only due to the guards

who were permanently present at the river, but also due to the organisation of urban space. *'You do not feel the Danube in this town. I've been in Hârşova and I could feel it there, it was much closer to me. But it was not a border, as it is here.'* He told me about the inappropriateness of the civic center in Severin, about how its building created lack of access to the natural landscape and its entertaining potential. *'A city builds itself and this was not the case with our civic center.'* The civic center had been reconstructed in a way that moved attention away from the river walk as a site for leisure to a place closer to the main road far away from the Danube. This distancing of the river from the senses and locals' leisure practices went along with the heavy industrialising of the place. In practical terms, long kilometers of the river walk were, after the war, occupied through setting up or extending industrial estates, including a navy building factory, a rail car factory, a military unit etc. The Danube, its landscape and enjoyments were thus transformed into a place refused to people, populated instead with factories and institutions of control, an ideological and material site of discipline and surveillance. The civic center rerouted the locals' walks of promenade orienting them towards the uptown, departing them from the river.

10.4.5. Crossing, in practice and fantasy

Cristi, one of my local friends, and I were in a bar in Turnu Severin, talking and waiting for a football match screened on TV. Cristi is a long-term unemployed young man and he started to challenge me with his disappointing views in relation to the local job market. He then told me about an offer he received recently – to be a lumberjack, a very demanding and low paid job. He told me he declined the job. In his personal style, he then shared with me a strong fantasy of what he would be doing in the near future. He told me about a job he was expecting as a worker at a local factory of tyre covers.

'I will get 1,000 lei plus vouchers every month. In addition, I will start going to Serbia again, for cigarettes. And I will make 5-600 lei every month from cigarettes and alcohol.'

He added that he would not frequent bars anymore, because he would become a busy businessman. Moreover, in five years he would have saved a lot of money, more than he

would ever expect, which he would buy an expensive car with, a Benz, to go abroad, settle there and work as a taxi driver. *‘And I will never ever return to Severin.’*

Crossing appears here as a category of the border spacetime, and a direct product of disappointment with dwelling. Crossing enables the articulation of different subject positions in relation to life on the move, opposed to the boredom and hopelessness of dwelling in towns and villages with few occupational opportunities. Even if not always an available practice, crossing lives intensely in fantasy and occupies the aspirations of many borderlanders. It existed in this way even more intensely during socialism, or immediately after World War II, in the time of absolute restrictions. The active fantasising about themselves involved in various forms of smuggling, quick enrichment, better life conditions, as well as perceptions of past, present, and future cross-border asymmetries between localities, people, living standards, ways to control the border, indicates their desire to become proper actants across the border and to refuse solace with the poor conditions of dwelling. The absence of a familiar landscape for the dispossessed people of Turkish origin from Ada-Kaleh is also a context of productive fantasising that gives way to actants in different forms, both representable and non-representable. A different context of the border which was not developed in this thesis is that of the post-1989 long periods of gas contraband stimulated by the embargoes enforced upon Yugoslavia. After embargoes ended in late 1990’s, smugglers were abandoned in a deep disillusionment and desire for their former lucrative activity. In the wake of embargo-contraband, crossing as a mode of subjectivation is produced by the stressful everyday experience of the lost practice. The sentiment of loss appears in other spatiotemporal intersubjective contexts in relation to the lack of freedom of movement, familiar landscape, different forms of wealth, and privileges.

In Turnu Severin, as long as there were opportunities across the border and regulations relaxed, perceptions of the city and living standards were different from Cristi’s and other respondents’. This was the case with the boom of incoming Serbians for shopping and marketing in the city, in the 1970’s and 1980’s, embargoes, massive flows of work and trade into Yugoslavia in the 1990’s. Gigi, another respondent, told me that when Severin was invaded by Serbians, Albanians, Moldavians, the pleasure of life was much higher. *‘It was real life, it was good then.’*

On one of our meetings, Petre from Orșova told me about a special moment which announced the building of the dam and the promise of crossing to borderlanders on both sides of the Danube. This moment had been used as a crossing opportunity – the first major one in the two decades – by thousands of Yugoslavian citizens into Romania. In September 1964 the Romanian president Gheorghiu Dej visited the future site of the hydroelectric power plant and passed on a bridge of ships into Yugoslavia, where president Tito was waiting him with anthems and cannons. The whole convoy then passed into Romania, across this bridge. Romanians could not cross into Yugoslavia as they were not yet allowed then. Petre recalls that the Serbians coming to the Romanian side in large numbers were very enthusiastic, and they kept saying things like: *‘we want to go to Romania, because we have brothers, friends there. We’re going with you, Tito!’*.

‘The Serbian legions came flooding, after almost 20 years of oppression. Some were coming from agricultural work, barefoot, everybody came how they could.’

In the evening they were supposed to go back. Their return took actually three days. As the bridge of ships was dismantled, they were going to harbor in Turnu Severin saying:

‘Hey, I’m Serbian and I’ve come here with Tito.’ ‘Yes, but Tito returned a week ago’. So many Serbians came then. Romanians were not allowed to go to Yugoslavia then.’

Petre’s crossings to Yugoslavia are also very relevant episodes.

‘When I first went into Serbia, something very emotional happened. My grandma told me to go find a woman in Kladovo, somebody she knew from her youth. I passed with a little bag of food, but I noticed that other people were passing with lots of things – smuggling had already begun. So I went there and found that woman. I visited the Kladovo fortress, I met some young people who were on their way to Sweden to study and I also met a pretty young but shy girl. I went to meet my colleagues at the museum there. On other trips I wanted to sell and buy like the others, but it wasn’t my main purpose. Once I was on the bus with my mother. Besides me there was a Gypsy guy with two full buckets. He told me: ‘Hey boy, aren’t you carrying anything? No? Well you’re kind of strange then’. He gave me a bucket to take across, so I wouldn’t go empty-handed. Some people were specialists in small cross-border trade. I felt some sort of freedom doing these trips, something special. This small trade degenerated soon into pure smuggling. In the 90’s it was already a mass phenomenon.’

All these stories indicate a very intense experience and enthusiasm with crossing the border, even in persons who were not strongly committed to make a permanent life style of

that. Petre, Constantin and other respondents had little personal commitment to smuggling, but they were very attached, in different periods of their lives, to the imagination of crossing the border. Sorin, the former urban planner from Turnu Severin, also provides a case in point. He is a typical example of disappointed dweller, basically a non-crosser. “*Although I lived at the frontier for most of the time, I have never had an experience of crossing it*”. He told me that he would have been able to clandestinely make it to Yugoslavia at some point, but he could not explain why he had no temptation of this kind, neither before 1989, nor after.

Daniel, a 50-year old man from Breznița, a village just outside Turnu Severin, recounted to me the intense presence of the border guards since his childhood. They were coming almost daily into Breznița to ask about suspects who want to cross the Danube clandestinely. They were also permanently inquiring about fellow villagers with crossing passes who carried merchandise into Yugoslavia, what they were carrying there, how long and where they stayed. He could not remember a period in his life without controls and checks, in town, in his village, in local factories in which he worked etc. Beyond this permanent surveillance and control, he crossed the border many times to buy and resell various goods at marketplaces around, all coming from Serbia, Hungary or Bulgaria. His wife had always been even more involved in this itinerant business. As he worked at the rail car factory in Turnu Severin, he carried pieces produced there to Serbia, selling them for good cash. For regular border-crossers like Daniel and his wife, dwelling was accomplished as a joyful experience through crossing. This would have not been possible without the intense relatedness established with the border guards and customs officers. Before 1989 he had a job at the car service shop in Gura Văii, just next to the Iron Gates dam. That was an ideal location to relate to the persons of control. He is still very proud of his pre-1989 relationships with the customs ‘bosses.’ He repaired their cars and that was the beginning of their friendship for purposes of crossing with all the necessary items without checks and harsh treatment. He also worked a period at Hidroconstruct¹⁹ where he often had visits to Serbian partners across the Danube – another occasion to get to know customs officers and border guards. Funnily enough, there was a time when the customs officers were begging him insistently to order a cross-border pass for himself.

¹⁹ Company responsible with the construction and maintenance of the Iron Gates hydropower plant.

The direct experience with the control and its people, through mutual knowledge outside their workplace and negotiation of mutual benefits was a major source of subjectivation, personally invested with positive or negative meaning, impacting individuals, households and their economic strategies, life styles, joys with crossing and dwelling in general. At some point, due to his close ongoing friendship to key border guards and customs officers, Daniel gained the impression that the border did not exist. *‘As far as I went there so easily, for every need or purpose, in my mind there was no border.’* This invisibility of the border is, again, a peculiar frontier effect (Donnan, Wilson 2010) connected to crossing practices, an effect which appears now in the absence of constraining factors, but in the presence of facilitating actants.

Similar to dwelling, crossing accounts for a great deal of imaginations and practices in my respondents’ narratives. However, it appears in different forms. For some, such as Daniel, it constitutes a resource they constantly exploited at the border. This approach to crossing produces the illusion that the border does not exist as delineation, as regular border crossers develop strong relations to the state workers at the border in order to facilitate their trips and make their business predictable in long term. For others, crossing is a lost resource. This is the case of so many people that made cash of contraband trade in the exceptional context of the embargoes upon Yugoslavia in the 1990’s. As this practice was made unavailable more than 12 years ago, some of them continued to make profit from cigarette smuggling, although it was not that profitable as before. Others stayed at home and experienced the disillusionment of life at the border, as regular non-crossers. Still for others, crossing was never a practice to engage with. This is the Constantin’s case, for example. For these people, crossing has always been invested with either fantasy and desire, or fear and anxiety in relation to control and persecution (especially before 1989). Cristi is an interesting case of romantic fantasising and hope about crossing. Occasional border crossers were also usual among my respondents. Petre is one of them. He tried small smuggling as well, but it did not work for him, as he had interests in different other things. Other forms of crossing which I regularly encountered during fieldwork were the illegal flights before 1989, or the regular seasonal labour in Serbia, which is still a way to subsist for many poor rural families at the border today.

Again, as we see, there are several different approaches to crossing which are strongly connected to the ways in which these people experienced dwelling in various periods at the

border. It is interesting to see that crossing is generally a source of hope and excitement, and enables political subjectivities of contestation of the border object. Also, crossing does not only produce subjects that formulate their discontent in relation to actants and powers within the border network. Crossing, as a practice, creates innovation and new actants, sets of social relations and spatiotemporal connections across the border. It sets the border as a becoming entity that resembles the tidemark concept developed by Green (2009). Whilst border crossers become reflexive subjects in relation to particular human and non-human actants, they bring innovation and transformation within the border network. Crossing, in the context of a disappointing dwelling at the border, contributes to undoing the border black box.

To sum up at this point, dwelling and crossing constitute a wide range of practices and imaginations through which they comply with or resist against powerful actants in the border network, or adapt to diverse processes and activities initiated by them. Dwelling and crossing, as more or less creative responses to attempts of closing the border object, make visible elements that preclude the black boxing of the border network. The border appears instead as an actor network in a constant process of becoming, characterised by bifurcations and multiplication of activities, actors, and actants that resist homogenisation, stabilisation, and fixity.

One assumption of this chapter was that transforming landscapes are important processes that contribute to the making of the border. In line with actor-network theory, the underlying argument was that the landscape of the frontier can be seen as an actant that either contributes to the border's blackboxing, or prevents it. It can also provide motives for the impossibility of blackboxing. The construction of the Iron Gates dam appeared, in Law's (1999) terms, as a punctualisation of the border network. Yet, as the ethnography shows, it also offered premises for antagonistic options for the borderlanders in areas of crossing and dwelling. Thus, for most of the people I talked to during fieldwork, the border has never become a blackbox, or a clear punctualisation. However, there is a great individual diversity in the ways the border's blackboxing became impossible. For this reason, the chapter employed 'dwelling' and 'crossing' as domains of practical and (inter)subjective individual engagement with the border that point to this diversity. From a material viewpoint, the changing landscape of the border is the outcome of the human intervention into nature, dictated by political and economic rationale, thus facilitating or constraining dwelling and crossing practices. The dam,

as an all-present actant in the processes described in the thesis, does many times stand for the border itself, as an effect of constant shifting, or actantialisation that renders the dam visible or invisible to borderlanders. With this matter of (in)visibility, the actor network theory is again useful, as it defines relations between the actors within a network not just in material terms, but also in its semiotic aspects, thus paying attention to imagination, intentionality, reflexivity, and interests that make actors perceive objects in their proximity and act accordingly. Landscape is thus an individual opportunity for reflexivity and action that people invest in their particular spacetimes. From the actor-network theory viewpoint, landscape becomes an actant that can not necessarily homogenise various perspectives of the other actors and actants involved in the border work. This enduring heterogeneity is conducive of politics and diverse political subjects which in turn make the border black box an impossible object of knowledge and experience.

11. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has investigated physical and semiotic closures and openings of the Romania-Yugoslavia border with special reference to the 1950's and 1960's, in order to understand processes of border making through practices and discourses by various actants. Analytically, it relied mainly on actor-network theory. A special focus have been the processes through which the border network or entity is expected to become a blackbox, that is, to close itself an object of knowledge, a clear-cut accepted idea for everyone, including the borderlanders. Also, attention has been paid to processes and developments that created disruptions and disconnections in the border network, processes that were described here as undoing the black box. Conflicting meanings, representations and experiences of dwelling and crossing at the border are traced ethnographically in three fiction novels and a large ethnographic chapter that analyses narratives of a number of respondents I had in-depth interviews with during my fieldwork. My main interest was to see whether and how the materialities of border regimes, in their practices and imaginations of dwelling and crossing, do affect the capacity of the border to become a clearly defined object, legible and intelligible, namely, a black box. On the other hand, the material has been investigated in relation to the

border as an entity, namely, the ways in which respondents and fiction works objectified the border and its effects in their lives, through practices of crossing and dwelling. The analytical strategy followed an approach similar to what Butler (2010) explains as the inquiry into performativity and its ‘ontological effects’:

(...) we might begin with already delimited understandings (...). Secondly, performativity works, when it works, to counter a certain metaphysical presumption about culturally constructed categories and to draw our attention to the diverse mechanisms of that construction. Thirdly, performativity starts to describe a set of processes that produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities or, fourthly, that lead to certain kinds of socially binding consequences. (p. 147)

Similar to Butler’s inquiry into performativity, this thesis started from the idea that the social sciences’ study of borders asserts claims for conceiving borders as unquestionable and predictable entities that play as lines or delineations in the somewhat fixed parameters of culture, state and territory. A lot of research on borders developed in political science, sociology, history, geography, economics, and law point out borders as objects made and fixed within sovereignty claims. Social anthropology, as argued in the theory chapter, produces, in contrast, a strong inquiry on processes that make and unmake borders, thus departing from metaphysical presumptions. I especially indicated two major scholarly developments – the ‘frontier effect’ (Donnan, Wilson 2010) and the ‘tidemark’ (Green 2009) – that, in my reading, have the potential to open borders to processes to non-essentialist, dereifying inquiries. This thesis takes this body of anthropological work on borders and develops it ethnographically and analytically into an illustration of the strengths actor-network theory has to offer to the study of borders. By employing the actor-network theory, this thesis was able to show ‘processes that produce ontological effects’ (Butler 2010), that is, either blackboxing or undoing of the black box of the border.

A major conclusion of this thesis concerns the diversity of border situations described. Although powerful actants such as the dam, or the party state, and various other smaller actors generated by the former tried to impose discourses and practices of homogenisation and consensus, dwellings and crossings were actually represented and lived in different ways. I argue that, in two of the fiction works described – Jar’s *Undeva pe Dunăre* and *La borna 203* – the border appears closed both physically and as an object of knowledge, that is, the

blackboxing of the border network triumphs. With regard to crossing, closedness refers to the fact that the border was legally inaccessible for crossers. Flows that did occur in those two novels were those of Yugoslavian citizens into Romania. Most of these people were detained and imprisoned for the violation of the regime's rules. Other, reverse cross-border flows were dismissed by Jar. The question of flows is articulated through an anti-flow rhetoric in the two fictions. With regard to dwelling, closeness refers in the two fiction novels to the cohesion and collective consciousness resulted among peasants, border guards and other relevant actors over the issue of defending the border. This solidarity is described by Jar to dominate everyday life at the borderland. For Jar, as a proletcult writer, the final goal, in my reading, is to communicate the border as an actor network that successfully produces homogenisation of living conditions and brutally transforms difference into sameness, thus describing the frontier during the post-war quiet conflict with Yugoslavia as a tyranny of sameness, as Derrida would say (Derrida 2001). The border was thus closed as an object of knowledge in accounts that describe class struggle based on internal alliances of various proletarian factions and the difference established between the working class and the local bourgeoisie threatened with dispossession and persecution. The everyday interactions between border guards, party cadres, police, and local peasants, on one hand, and spies, traitors, *chiaburs*, on the other, set into motion a process by which the border became materially and semiotically invested by Jar and the characters of his fiction novels with a homogeneous body of meanings and experiences that reflect the official tenet of the Romanian party state in late 1940's and 1950's. Reaching consensus in aspects of the border, the frontier made invisible the difference that already existed before establishing these representations (the frontier as it looked before the Soviet occupation, and before the war), and was thus communicated as an object obvious to everyone – a place, an institution heavily militarised and securitised that defends the 'Motherland' and sovereignty against the capitalist enemy.

In Lotreanu's *Iluzia*, a modernist fiction novel that refers to the border regime developed in the process of Romanian de-sovietisation of the early 1960's – a cross-border mobility regime that maintained harsh restrictions on crossing, especially for Romanian citizens – the closeness of the border was challenged. Although physically closed from the viewpoint of the legal border regime, opening and difference were key words in this case. With no ruminations on questions about foreign spies and bourgeois classes who subverted the

sovereignty of the communist republic, *Iluzia* acknowledges the reverse flows, from Romania into Yugoslavia. It opens a debate about the relational character of the border regime. Difference and heterogeneity supersede sameness and homogenisation and conquer the realm of its author and main characters' subjectivity. The border is not just an arena for different social groups struggling for precedence and control, the border is no longer an object characterised by the central place of the party state or working class. It is rather communicated as a difference in itself containing other different faces the border had in the past, or in the future, an entity that considers the already different entities that make up parts of it. The border is acknowledged as a tidemark, to use Green's (2009) insight inspired by the philosophy of difference formulated by Derrida (1997). Tidemark is a concept developed from the presumption that borders are usually understood as lines, as delineations of territorial claims of sovereignty. From lines, Green (2009) proceeds to refer to Derrida's notion of trace in order to find out a more accurate way to define borders as processes that incorporate permanent change, that is, tidemarks.

'The unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance (between the 'world' and 'lived experience') is the condition of all other differences, of all other traces, and it is already a trace. (...) The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference [différance] which opens appearance [l'apparaître] and signification.' (Derrida 1997: 65)

As mentioned, the border is described in *Iluzia* as a process that starts from a number of differences and contestations operated by central characters between 'the world' and 'lived experience'. The border, which appeared fixed in Alexandru Jar's writings, was, in *Iluzia*, a fuzzy object with no fixity and clearness. The border is the spacetime which finds the guard Dima and Jack Aroneanu, a distinguished professor and offender of the border regime of mobility, connected in an intimate communion of ideas and aspirations. The claim to difference that these fiction characters operate produces an irreconcilable distance between the subject and the party state, but connects the subject to the border in a new, different way, whereas Alexandru Jar described this relation as utopian and unconditional consensus in a paradoxical situation of a heavily militarised, objectified, and untouchable frontier. The border and its regime of crossing became, for Laurențiu Dima and Jack Aroneanu, a manipulable and contestable entity, a spacetime for reflection and action, and a passage to 'freedom'. *Iluzia*

makes difficult the consensus around the official metanarrative of the black box. Through Dima, Aroneanu and other characters, *Iluzia* develops a critique against sovietisation and its border regime occurred in the 1940's and 1950's. The border black box was thus opened.

As mentioned, the thesis also examined material collected through ethnographic fieldwork. Narratives of my respondents open up the black box of the border even more, to the point in which blackboxing becomes impossible. Referring to various experiences my respondents had with the border in the 1950's, 1960's, 1970's, and even before and after 1989, these narratives revealed various representations, connections and critical moments of subjectivation in which actants (such as the state, dam, present or absent landscape) in the border network were revealed and described in their processes and activities of remaking the border, both materially and immaterially. Dwelling and crossing were related to various contexts in which the individual's relation with the border became either disappointing (in experiences of deportations, relocations etc.) or joyful (cross-border trading, contraband etc.). Physical closings and openings in the border regime alternate in these narratives and juxtapose irreparable and irreversible opening of the border-object to the claims of closedness made by more influential actants that affected the people's lives. Semiotic opening of the border-object establishes a multiplicity of relations expressed in terms of disappointment, successes and hopes in various spacetimes at the border.

The border has been communicated as closed and fixed for decades in the post-World War II period, until 1989. It was part of a Cold War border regime that enforced harsh restrictions to crossing and dwelling in the border areas, restrictions that changed over time. This thesis shows that the fiction novels and narratives of practices and imaginations by borderlanders indicate that restrictions were enforced or relaxed, negotiable or mandatory, and various subject positions and practices (re)made the border spacetimes in many different ways. In the post-World War II context, Romania has historiographically been described as an anxious and restrictive state due to a heavily centralised economy and its vicinity with 'revisionist' Yugoslavia. In the face of such evidence, it was life at the border with its peculiarities and the always-changing conditions of crossing and dwelling, which disenchanted the strict socialist bordering. The Iron Gates dam opened on the Danube, the Southern Romania-Serbia border, in the early 1970's, in the middle of the country's period of party socialism, after almost a decade of preparation, work and massive displacements of local

populations, also reflected in urbanisation, industrialisation and significant migration flows from the inland into the border area. The dam prompted important changes in the lives of borderlanders as much as it transformed state relations between Romania and Yugoslavia significantly. On the one hand, it generated insecurity and material dispossession for people, as many lost their houses, properties and even entire places were flooded, such as Ada-Kaleh island. On the other hand, it gave way to possibilities of border crossing and hopes for better dwelling (hopes that were remembered as having been unfulfilled), after twenty years of absolute restrictions. Crossing stimulated a wide range of ‘entrepreneurial’ activities in a socialist period when the private room of manoeuvre of this kind had been very limited. Many people from the border used to love smuggling. The journeys across the border to Yugoslavia provided borderlanders with opportunities for extra cash income and access to Western consumerism. However, not everyone gained experiences of crossing the border. My thesis documented some interesting cases in which the physical opening of the border was not followed by in the imaginations or practices of dwelling. Crossing and dwelling are pointed out as spatiotemporal frames of reference for the subjective and intersubjective assessment of the relation with the border. Closings and openings, either material or semiotic, complicated and opened the border object and allowed difference in an unprecedented form.

While these new practices produced a fleeting joy with life, rooted in discontent, a deep dissatisfaction was at times connected to the living conditions, due to increasing control and surveillance and heavy shortages that affected a wide range of areas of private and collective life. Crossing and the small trade largely fell beyond the party-state’s control, whereas the dwelling was directly stimulated through the interaction between individuals and the coercive institutional apparatus, or the whole series of actants, human and non-human that were generated. Therefore, the border meant very different things to people and subjected borderlanders in various realms of their lives. The split subjectivity perpetuated by the ‘duality’ of dwelling and crossing was a constant force of generating different senses of the border, by multiplying spaces and temporal references.

As mentioned earlier, in some contexts and to some people described in this thesis, the Romania-Yugoslavia border appeared as a thing, whereas in other contexts it did not. Kristeva (1982) makes it clear that:

‘if I am affected by what does not yet appear to me as a thing, it is because laws, connections, and even structures of meaning govern and condition me. That order, that glance, that voice, that gesture, which enact the law for my frightened body, constitute and bring about an effect and not yet a sign. I speak to it in vain in order to exclude it from what will no longer be, for myself, a world that can be assimilated.’ (p. 10)

The situations in which the border could not be assimilated as an object were reported in cases of various losses or dispossessions. The loss of occupational opportunity in the present, the inability to cross and make money out of smuggling, the loss of familiar places (for the Turks of Ada-Kaleh, or dwellers of old Orșova, Vârciorova and other border localities), experiences of deportations, or the border guard Dima’s experience of identification and symbiosis with an offender of the border regime of mobility were all examples in which the border as an object was obscured by difference, opening, and discontent. Sometimes, it lived unconsciously as an ‘abject’, that is, an object that is denied signification by the subject. This was the case of Turks who still dream of Ada-Kaleh as a present absence, and imagine the dam as negation, repudiation, and denial of their lost dwelling. These subjects perform acts of regression in search of their lost transformational object (Bollas 1987) – the island, the place where they were born and raised, and provided almost all their significant social relations which are now absent like the island itself – in place of which remained a reality – the dam, the Danube, the border – they refuse, or refused for a long time to acknowledge. Similar imaginations of the dam were described by other respondents as well – relocated people from Orșova and Vârciorova, for example. In this context, negation, repudiation, denial of the new materialities of the border’s landscape and the lost ones constitute political acts through which individuals construct themselves as subjects at the border in relation to various human and non-human actants that tended to take precedence at various points within the border network. Therefore, the same people have been subjects to many different things that signified the border entity: subjects to the dam, subjects to the party state, subjects to the landscape, present or absent, subjects to the conflict with Yugoslavia etc. Surely, this regression with the aim of denial of materiality was not always the case. Initially, for many of them the dam constituted a source of hope and improvement in their lives, which alternated with moments of contestation and disappointment.

It is important to emphasise here the ethnographic and analytical impossibility of the border black box, for both border people and anthropologists studying borders. Yet, the border

can still be seen: 1) as an effect of other things or actants, such as the dam which made crossing possible, or 2) as an entity that, in its becoming, effects other things and actants. The processes of shifting in space, time and actants, or the multiplication and proliferation of actants change relations of power and influence in the network and at time obscure some actants, while making visible others. In these conditions, the forms of subjectivation my informants spoke about in their narratives of dwelling and crossing are sometimes related to a border effect. In other words, the border itself is sometimes perceived as an entity holding a direct influence over the lives of borderlanders. Here, the notion of frontier effect coined by Donnan and Wilson (2010) is of much relevance. In a similar way in which anthropologists spoke of state effects, by tracing the objectification of the state through practices and narratives and refusing to see the state as an object-out-there as having an objective existence, so too appears the border in various instantiations to my respondents and fiction characters described in this thesis. Yet, in various representations and experiences, the border was neither object nor subject, but an abject – an entity that is denied in its existence or significance.

In addition, the proliferation of the actants within the border network, proliferation that make some of them (the state, for example) invisible at different times, advances an important idea in the anthropology of borders – a critique of centrism emphasised earlier. Centrism of state, territory etc. creates the illusion of permanence (Pada 2007) of these signifiers in relation to the border, whereas state and territory usually do affect selectively the individuals and their historicised and temporalised subject positions at the border. A variable geometry of forces is revealed by the subjective material of my interviews and fieldnotes to the point that there is no single centre, or central actant within the border network, and even no single idea of border. As Callon (1998) notes for the study of markets, social actors are ‘competent’ enough about the workings of the state, or border control institutions, for example, in order to be able to suspend their stressful effects temporarily. The relative effects, differently temporalised, produced by party, state, smuggling, dam construction, cross-border trading, unemployment and recent economic crisis etc. at (inter)subjectivity level, create the ground for a strong ethnographic critique of various canons of centrism conveyed in the social sciences’ study of borders. Culture, territory, state, sovereignty, or the border-policy approach are challenged by the intersubjective material the border-ethnographer works with.

As reflected in the fieldwork narratives, the border network accommodates difference, or sameness, antagonises subjects and entities or gives way to consensus in relation to a political formation/regime, or another. Here there are different forms of political subjectivity. Alexandru Jar describes the border as an object of negation, as a ‘not-this’ (Deleuze 1994) in relation to the former, bourgeois political regime, but he does so in order to communicate the border as an entity finally marked by order and consensus. By imposing a metanarrative of stalinism, a party-based class struggle aimed at purification and protection of the inside from the outside, Jar and his characters dismiss the other faces of the border. Jar’s border has nothing to do with the friendly relations that existed between populations from each side of the border, or with the well-established cross-border flows into either country for economic and social motives. The ‘patriarchal’ social landscape of the border until World War II is completely absent from the picture he paints. By communicating the border as military defence and class struggle, a state of emergency which is only resolved by consensus and alliance between working class and party factions, Jar describes the border as an entity already being (politically) different from its former faces. The resulted ‘entity’ is a determination that starts from negation of the ‘old’ order – a simulacra antagonising with the previous model of sociopolitical organisation, an object characterised by unmediated difference, as Deleuze (1994) would put it.

In Lotreanu’s *Iluzia* and in the ethnographic material from my respondents, difference is placed at the level of subjectivity and it is mediated. Dima, Aroneanu and other characters of the novel or fieldwork engage with the conventional and relativity of the border, and make sense of various border effects in their lives, but fail to construct the border as an object. Whereas Jar leaves the border in the situation of being different with no reference to the previous socioeconomic and political order in relation to which the border was different then, Lotreanu, and my fieldwork respondents take the border as an entity in the situation of becoming different, thus emphasising process and a spatiotemporal comparative perspective that sets the border network in transformation. In this case, politics is generated intersubjectively from the difference that precedes and succeeds the entity (Derrida 2001; Baugh 1997), namely, the border black box that is contested, opened and finally made impossible in its presumed fixity.

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