Dwarfs from Wallachia, or Being a Nomad in Europe

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How to Recognize Eastern European Men

Let us imagine the following situation: You are in the tourist information centre in the middle of Amsterdam, the year is 2004, and together with your bus ticket for one of the European destinations you receive a leaflet from the Dutch police to inform you about a specific danger existing in this town. The text is written in several languages (English, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish) and says that fake policemen with fake police identity cards have been seen recently in the streets; these men are Eastern European men and they will show you their fake card, ask you for your credit card, ask you for your PIN code to activate that card, and take your money from your account right in front of your eyes. We will not go too far with our analysis of the real incidents that caused the creation of this leaflet.[1] At this moment, we are interested in the construction of the identity of East European men as something specific and distinctive.

The first thing to notice here is that this is not a neutral warning about some criminal ''activities'' and ''perpetrators'' but a geographically and almost ideologically coloured representation of these people. In this leaflet, the identity of East Europeans has been created as an eternal evil versus the naïve identity of all others who could come in contact with them. These men are dangerous especially because they do not use open force and violence to make you do something but have a very sophisticated strategy—showing you their fake police identification cards. As a civilized Western subject, you are supposed to gladly cooperate with the police, giving them your credit card, not asking any further questions, believing that they will use this method of surveillance and interference in your personal life for some ''higher'' cause: the order and security of the whole of society. In the era of increased police activities regarding ''state security,'' you will passively and willingly let them take all ''required'' information about you, with not even a small trace of doubt or critical objection to this procedure. The state and its police are here to ''protect'' you even from yourself if necessary.

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[1] The leaflet can be downloaded from the official website of the city of Amsterdam (<www.amsterdam.nl/contents/pages/00000467/leaflet.pdf> 10 Sept. 2004).

Maybe as a simple remnant of the Cold War era, Eastern European men are defined here as one of the biggest threats to this law and order. A long time ago, they used to be hidden behind the big wall, they were far away, and you were able to have your small and peaceful life. But with all these changes in the last decade of the twentieth century, you are not safe anymore: They are here, among ''us.'' They are clever; they are using improved techniques to threaten this perfect system. The best thing for you to do—if you ever meet an Eastern European man—will be to not try to communicate, to grab your wallet and credit cards, and run away as fast as you can. You never know what he could do to you.

This leaflet would seem small and irrelevant to some, but actually it is an important sign of mechanisms and images created about others in the official West European imagination. The consequences of this process are yet to be seen, but at this moment we can predict some of them: Unfortunately, they are not a new invention. We are dealing here with a process of signifying certain groups of people as dangerous and unwanted, people who should be cut off from the healthy body of this society as soon as possible. It can also be used as a justification of some future police actions that could take place against these ''evil'' men.

This paper will shed some more light on one of the Serbian/Balkan/East European ethnic communities that have been ''infiltrated'' into the West for decades now. Their name is the Vlah people/Wallachians, usually known as ''gastarbeiter,'' and this will be the story about their dealing with globalization processes and their specific reaction to Western culture. Also, this story about them aims to undermine common stereotypes of immigrants and guest workers as a security problem.[2] The main question for the West here remains the same: What are you afraid of?

Being Vlah, Being the Other

The genesis of the name ''Vlah'' has a long history in the Balkan Peninsula and the changes it underwent during a long historical period are the reason why it is so hard to offer one simple definition. This name has its origins, in fact, in Central and Western Europe where it was used to refer to ethnic groups that were using the Latin language: ''Originating from the Celtic tribe Volcae, this name was used by Germans as Walhaz, Walh, in order to describe Romanized neighbors. Further, Slavic tribes borrowed this term from Germans. . . . In the area of the Balkan Peninsula, these Romanic ethnic groups had started migrating to the mountains, running away from the Slavic migrations.[3] Their main economy in the mountains was cattle breeding, so the name Vlah has become almost

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[2] Or as Jef Huysmans has noticed, ''the dangerous process of 'securitizing' societal issues'' in the Western media and public opinion (Huysmans 53).
[3] This process had started in the sixth and seventh century AD.

a synonym for cattle breeders. . . . During the Turkish domination[4] in this area, this term was used for all groups with a cattle breading economy and Orthodox Christian religion.[5] Later on, this name was used by many with a bad connotation to refer to all Orthodox groups'' (Ćorović, trans. by the author). As a consequence of this long process, we will find today ''Vlahs'' in Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia, and north-eastern Serbia, all referring to actually different ethnic groups.

Almost from the beginning, the name Vlah has acquired negative connotations since these tribes of nomads were a constant threat to the dominant socio-political systems of their times, refusing to become part of them and leading their lives according to their own laws and rules. They were constantly seen as a people of ''lower race.'' For this reason, I will use a different name—''Wallachians''—as used by the Danish ethnologist, Carl-Ulrik Schierup, together with Aleksandra Ålund, in order to evade all possible misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and existing connotations that the use of the term Vlah could entail. I will use name Wallachians for the population that can be described as Serbian Romanians and which populates a large region of north-eastern Serbia.

The first West European ethnologist to become interested in the history and life of this group, the just-mentioned Carl-Ulrik Schierup, published an interesting and valuable work entitled *Houses, Tractors, Golden Ducats—Prestige Game and Migration* in 1974, after studying migrants to Denmark from (then) Yugoslavia. Talking about the results of his field research with Aleksandra Ålund in the early 1970s, he notices the equal distinction of Wallachians both from Romanians and from Serbs: ''Culturally, and according to family structure and social organization, there are, however, still considerable differences between these two population groups of north eastern Serbia. Moreover, Wallachians, in contrast to the Serbs in the same region, were still, during the time when our field work in the area started (1971) predominantly orientated towards their rural villages and agriculture. . . . In Serbia, the term 'Vlah' (e.g. Wallachians) bears a negative and devaluated connotation'' (Schierup 461).

When asked, Wallachians define their national identity as being Serbs, with the emphasis that their ethnic origin is Romanian.[6] In a cultural sense, they

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[4] After final domination on the Balkan Peninsula in the fourteenth century AD.

[5] Due to this economy, cattle-breeders were forced to constant migrations, becoming in this way nomadic in their essence.

[6] Before the 1990s, the dominant group identity declared by all ethnic groups in Yugoslavia was that they were all Yugoslavians and Wallachians were no excuse. After the 1990s and the break-up of Yugoslavia, Wallachians has started using the term Serbian together with all citizens of Serbia, regardless of their ethnic origin, as a political identity originating from the name of the country they live in. We could even say that they still perceive this political identity (being Yugoslavian, later being Serbian) as a supranational identity that does not exclude their ethnic identity. In that sense, it is hard to define precisely how many Wallachians officially live in Serbia today. Due to the fact that vast number of them has probably declared as Serbs, the last official statistics show there are 40,000 Wallachians. Data given by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

are an interesting product of a hybridization of Romanian and Serbian traditions.[7] One of the strongest components differentiating them from the Serbs is their specific Wallachian language, a dialect of Romanian, which is only used as a spoken language, with Serbian used as a written language. Also, the existence of strong magical and mystical praxis—considered to be a unique religious-magical complex[8]—is something they are famous for in this region. For them the practice of ''white'' and ''black'' magic is still believed to be an essential part in the attempt to achieve personal life goals and happiness, and vampires are an active part of their collective imagination.[9]

Nevertheless, in the past thirty years the social life of the Wallachians has been transformed by their traveling to Western European countries for work. They have almost become a synonym for ''gastarbeiter'' or guest workers in their homeland. Because of their extremely poor conditions of life and due to their low level of education, they started with seasonal migrations toward countries that needed them as a labor force. Being able to perform mainly heavy physical jobs, they were once again being considered to be on the lowest levels of the social hierarchy, both in the West and their native country.

The image that is often created in the West about foreign workers today is that they are a threat to the Western economy and social system. The example of the leaflet given at the beginning of this essay is just a small illustration of how migrants are cast as noninvited groups of people arriving to ''steal'' the money and happiness of the original inhabitants. Talking about the dominant image produced by the Western media and political leaders against the background of a growing feeling of insecurity in society, Jef Huysmans highlights the problem of creating the story about migrants and refugees as the source for this insecurity. The danger of this construction is that ''Once turned into a security problem, the migrant appears as the other who has entered (or who desires to enter) a harmonious world and, just by having entered it, has disturbed the harmony'' (Huysmans 59). In that sense, the only way to re-establish the stability and order of the system is to eliminate the elements perceived as a threat, in this case the immigrants. Immigrants are conceived as nonhumans, or rather objects that could be easily displaced in or out according to need.

According to this narrative, migrants are seen as self-organized groups of people who one day decided to invade the progressive and rich states of Western Europe. Serious studies of the history of European migrations, however, show anything but this. As Saskia Sassen has noticed, ''the immigration-receiving countries behave as though they were not parties to the process of immigration. But in fact they are partners. International migrations stand at the intersection

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[7] ''Today's Wallachian ethnic group in Serbia is the result of a long and complex process of ethno-cultural amalgamation'' (Schierup 460).
[8] Defined as such in Zecevic.
[9] This fact was especially intriguing for Schierup and has been elaborated in detail in his essay with Ålund.

of a number of economic and geopolitical processes that link the countries involved; they are not simply the outcome of individuals in search of better opportunities'' (1).

The example of the Wallachians substantiates Sassen's argument. In the early 1960s, men started the migration which at that time they perceived as a clearly temporary engagement with the aim to earn enough money to make some improvements to life conditions in their native villages. They did not simply pack their belongings with the intention to create new homes in the Western countries.[10] After finishing first jobs, usually the next invitation for some new place would come and today we find these people in decades-old ''temporary'' conditions of life. In Sassen's conclusions, migrations do not simply happen but are patterned and produced by receiving countries, in ''specific historical phases'' according to the needs of developed countries for labor (155).

After several years of this temporary migratory status, the usual scenario for these men was to get married in their native village and be joined by a wife in earning more money for their future home in the homeland. According to our informants during field research done in June 2003,[11] this life was a very hard one and both parts of the married couple usually had two heavily physical jobs. Their lives were strongly oriented toward hard work and as much accumulation of capital as possible, to create a basis for their future lives back in the homeland. They did not aim to become an active part of the ''receiving'' countries, and they were not encouraged to do so by the other side. After a few more years, such a couple would typically have a child[12] who would start its life in the home country, with grandparents caring for it. After finishing primary school in Serbia, the child would join their parents as an additional help in the West, soon starting his or her own family and bringing more help.[13] The political, economic, and social crisis of the 1990s in Serbia has become the main reason why these people had to decide to prolong their activities in the West for a few more years. During these years, the first generation of ''gastarbeiter'' encountered the first problems with their plan for continuing their lives in the home village: The new generation of grandchildren (even great-grandchildren) had become part of the receiving country, attending schools in the West and

[10] The public address by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in May 2004 was a clear demonstration of this strategy since Germany has to ''import'' at least 230,000 people annually if doesn't want its population of 83 million to shrink to 51 million in 2050. In other words, Germany can no longer hide these facts and has no choice than to finally have ''a modern immigration law,'' as Schröder himself put it. See more in Wallace.

[11] This field research was part of the art project ''Sculpture Gardens'' by photographer Vesna Pavlovic, and also included art historian Jelena Vesic. Photographs were shown at the exhibition of the same title in September 2003 at the FUSEBOX Gallery in Washington DC, followed by the lecture and presentation at the Corcoran College, Washington DC.

[12] One more characteristic of Wallachians is that their ideal is to have only one child, so that family capital and heritage does not need to be shared between more children.

[13] The average age to get married is 16 for boys and 14 for girls, thus creating several generations of the same family with the same aim—to accumulate money for their future life in homeland.

growing up in the society their grandparents have never seen as ''their own,'' and refusing to go back to the native villages of their grandparents.

What Will Happen to the House?

The first visible change during the first decade of the Wallachians' ''gastar-beiter'' life occurred when they invested their earnings in building new luxurious houses in their home villages. As already noticed by Serbian ethnologists Dobrila Bratic and Miroslava Malesevic, the house has become more than a simple place to live in—it has become the most important symbol of the new social status of their owners.[14] The aim is to have a bigger, larger, brighter, and more distinctive house than all the neighbors.[15] These houses could be described as ''architecture without architects,'' their owner actually also being their creator: giving his instructions and ideas to the building workers without any actual architectural plan. This term was introduced by Bernard Rudofsky to describe ''the unfamiliar world of nonpedigreed architecture. . . . For want of a generic label, we shall call it vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural, as the case may be'' (1).

The variety and eclecticism of these houses is something that immediately strikes the eye; it is quite impossible to find two identical houses. They are usually made in the image of villas seen in the West, and most of the time they are the products of combining several different examples and styles of Western villas, mixing the materials,[16] and not respecting neither the laws of ''official'' architecture nor of aesthetics.

The striking fact about these luxurious villas is that no one actually *lives* there: Their ''inhabitants'' usually visit only once a year in order to spend their summer holidays there. The person taking care of the buildings for the rest of the year is the oldest woman in the family, the grandmother who usually lives in an old and modest small house next to the new one. In the past few years, it has become common practice to hire a few seasonal workers from Romania in order to help maintain the house and its surrounding land. New houses are built to be exhibited, to be seen by the others. In terms of Western discourse, these houses are ''dysfunctional'' since they lack their first and main purpose—to be a shelter

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[14] In their analysis, Bratic and Malesevic tried to define the manifest and latent function of this new practice to build luxurious houses where nobody actually lives. According to them, the manifest function is ''the expression of the social status,'' and the latent function is ''integration of the family and continuing with its tradition'' in the moment when these families have been facing separation and disintegration due to economic migration (151, trans. by the author).

[15] It goes so far that some people are proud to have a house higher for one line of bricks than the neighbor's one.

[16] In most of the cases, these people even bring the materials they will use to build their houses from the West, making it even harder to other neighbors to make the exact copy of their house.

for their inhabitants. From such a perspective, it is impossible to understand the decades of investment into something that will never be used. But, as we have seen, that was never part of the original plan: Someone was supposed to come back.

It could be even seen as a paradox that these houses have become multifunctional in some other ways. Beside their symbolic value as status symbols, they have become a crucial part in the construction of the identity of the Wallachian people. The fact that these people still perform important ritual practices and religious celebrations within the borders of their native villages (weddings, baptisms, celebrations of important birthdays and anniversaries, funerals, etc.) is a clear sign of the space where they re-establish their own identity. They have never become a real part of the societies where they have actually worked and lived in the past decades, and their popular music is full of songs describing their longing for their homeland.[17] This is still the place where they define their social position and self-value: A person who has succeeded in life is a person who owns more than the others, and this must be visible to others.

We could recall here Guy Debord's interpretation of the capitalist system and definition of its values: ''The first stage of the economy's domination of social life brought about an evident degradation of *being* into *having* — human fulfillment was no longer equated with what one was, but with what one possessed. The present stage, in which social life has become completely dominated by the accumulated productions of the economy, is bringing about a general shift from *having* to *appearing* — all 'having' must now derive its immediate prestige and its ultimate purpose from appearances. At the same time all individual reality has become social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and is directly dependent on them. Individual reality is allowed to appear only if it is *not actually real*'' (point 17). Hence, the example of Wallachians and their practice of transforming their capital into something that has to be visible and shown could be seen as their own way of interpreting the basic lessons of capitalism. As a strategy of communication, this has become something practiced by these people ''in their own way.'' Their position in the social hierarchy both in Serbia and in the West is still very low on the scale and this has become their way to show their human value to the rest of the world. The amount of money spent on their celebrations, houses, cars, etc. is something an average person even in Europe could hardly imagine. Their reaction to their constant position as being less valuable was to speak out through the display of their capital—using houses, among other things. For the houses stay silent with only the surrounding neighborhood to ''see'' their message.

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[17] The research about this segment of their culture could be a completely new topic, but we can only mention lyrics like ''My village is prettier than Paris'' or ''A foot of my village is worth more than the whole United States'' as a short illustration of this.

After the first phase of the accumulation and display of capital (building houses, buying luxurious cars, buying the newest domestic and agricultural equipment, building luxurious tombs,[18] etc.), the latest elements in the display of social status have been added in front of the house: decorating gardens in the ''Western'' style with small statues of animals and, more commonly, German dwarfs (garden gnomes). A visitor would be surprised to find ''villages'' of small garden gnomes in this part of the world where they have never been a part of tradition nor imagination. These figures have been brought from the West, but recently this has become so fashionable and profitable that new ''artistic workshops'' have been developed in this part of Serbia with the same aim: to fulfill all dreams and visions of these people ready to spend a significant amount of money in order to prove their status and identity. We could say that dwarfs have come to this land with capital, or even—with capitalism. This connection between dwarfs and capitalism and the increasing number of gardens full of these sculptures will lead us to further explore some possible interpretations of these creatures in today's world. In other words, I will try to bring some more light to the problem of contemporary immigrants examining the connection between dwarfs and capitalism. Or, in other words, using the position of theoretical psychoanalysis that *the truth is out there*, rather than try to discover what is hidden in the darkness of these houses in order to find out something about the people who have built them; these houses are empty inside, so let us take a look outside, in front of the house where the statement is clearly exhibited.

Where Did the Dwarfs Come From?

From today's perspective, the genealogy of dwarfs looks almost as complicated as the genealogy of the name Vlah. The official web site of the *Encyclopedia Mythica* offers several possible names commonly used to describe very similar mythical creatures: elves, brownies, dwarfs, and *Heinzelmännchen*. According to this source, elves ''were originally the spirits of the dead who brought fertility. Later they became supernatural beings, shaped as humans, who are either very beautiful (elves of light) or extremely ugly (dark/black elves). They were worshipped in trees, mountains, and waterfalls'' (''Elf''). Brownies are defined as ''good-natured, invisible brown elves or household goblins that live in farmhouses and other country dwellings in Scotland. While people are asleep, they perform their labours

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[18] Paying respect to the late ancestors is an important part of their religious life and the practice of building luxurious tombs that should simulate home for the dead persons is one that has become fashionable with this new accumulation of capital. Mainly, these tombs look like small houses, equipped with everything the deceived could need in afterlife world: TV set, living room, refrigerator, food, etc.

for them. . . . If offered payment for their services or if they are treated badly, they disappear and are never seen again'' (''Brownie''). Dwarfs are ''small humanoids, about half the size of a man, who live in caves or in holes under the ground. They can be hostile towards man, but can also perform small labours for them. . . . Dwarfs are exceptionally skillful with their hands and make the most beautiful (and often magical) objects which surpass man-made objects by far'' (''Dwarf'').

It could be said that there is no known culture without a belief in supranatural beings, but the differences in how these beings are defined could be used as a key for a better understanding of the culture that has invented them. Elves are a part of the Norse mythology (also known as the Viking mythology) that belongs to pre-Christian religion (''Elf''). The genealogy then takes us to the next step of ancient Germanic mythology, closely related to the Anglo-Saxon heritage. In this way, the kingdoms of various elves inhabit the imagination of the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Austria, Island, and Great Britain. Each of these areas is defining them in different ways, but for our analysis we are mainly interested in the Germanic interpretation since our elves from Wallachian gardens have been brought from these countries.

Heinzelmännchen are defined as ''dwarfs or elves from German folk belief. They work at night for people whom they like, or to whom they are indebted'' (''Heinzelmännchen''). The most famous fairy-tale about them was written by August Kopisch and published in 1836 under the title *Die Heinzelmännchen,* later known in English translation as *The Elves from Cologne*.[19] In short, this fairy-tale can be seen as one possible answer to the question ''Why do we have to work?'' It is telling us a sad story from the idyllic past when people could just relax and let their work be done by the Heinzelmännchen:

> How comfortable it used to be at Cologne
> With the Heinzelmännchen there!
> If one was lazy
> One just rested on a bench and took it easy.
> They came by night before one even thought about it:
> The little men—and they swarmed
> And clapped, made noise, and plucked and pulled,
> And hopped and trotted, polished and scraped.
> And before a lazy fellow woke up
> His entire day's work was done. (Kopisch)

Further we read about all the works they were able to perform: for bakers, butchers, carpenters, brewers, and tailors. But, one day, the tailor's wife was too curious and wanted to discover who these helpful creatures were. She set them a trap and caught them while they were coming to work. This was

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[19] Although this early translation offers the use of the word *elves* as the equivalent for German *Heinzelmännchen*, I have decided to use the term *dwarfs* as closer to the original meaning and to evade possible misinterpretation.

the biggest mistake she could ever make—they have all disappeared from this happy town:

> One can no longer rest as before,
> One must do everything for himself!
> Everyone must be industrious himself,
> And scrape and polish
> And run and trot and dress and iron
> And pound and chop and cook and bake.
> Oh, if it could be again as it was back then!
> But this beautiful time will never come back again!'' (Kopisch)[20]

The suffering and sorrow are so convincing that these words can make us all feel sad for the fact that the *Heinzelmännchen* will not come back again. Or maybe we could see it as a fundamental fantasy of this culture when trying to define the meaning of work? Being free to spend a life in blessed laziness, as a synonym for happiness, while some invisible creatures do the work that needs to be done. As pictured in this fairy-tale, dwarfs are seen as strange, small, invisible masculine beings with funny hats and beards,[21] similar to men but actually enjoying the work they perform for people. This enjoyment of work is seen as one of their main characteristics, hence there is no need to pay them; indeed, they would be insulted if offered money for the job they do out of pure love.

Some interesting data can be found on the website of the annual festival in New Ulm, Minnesota, where the ''*Heinzelmännchen* family'' has become an essential part of the public celebration. Here we find the interpretation that ''although some people are led to believe these 'German' garden gnomes originated in Germany, their origin is actually in Turkey. They first appeared as stone representations in the 1300s symbolizing slaves working in mines. In the fourteenth century they were brought to Italy and from there to Germany in 1420, where they developed into the gnomes as we know them today'' (*Meet the Gnomes*). This fact is still to be confirmed, but it provides an interesting perspective connecting *Heinzelmännchen* with ancient slaves which could be useful for our further analysis.

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[20] The British version about these beings is formulated in the fairy-tale ''Elves and Shoemaker'' and is focused on the help elves did for a poor shoemaker, making the most beautiful shoes while he was sleeping, making him soon the richest man around. The ending is also different and a bit more optimistic—shoemaker's wife had an idea to give them presents—clothes and shoes—for their help. After taking these gifts, ''the shoemaker and his wife never saw the elves again. The business continued and the shoemaker now had enough money so that he could hire assistants, whom he trained with all his skill—plus a few elfish tricks of the trade. The shoemaker and his wife lived a very happy life without worry. Once in a while, when the wind blew in winter, they thought that they heard the elves singing but they never saw where the songs were coming from.''

[21] In defining their physical appearance the illustrations accompanying every edition of this fairy-tale are of great help.

In today's world, the story about happy dwarfs working for lazy people can be interpreted as a romantic attempt from the past to describe an ideal world of idle masters and their happy slaves. But the fact that this fairy-tale and these small creatures still live in the Western imagination of today should give us enough reason to try to interpret it from today's perspective. The world described in this fairy-tale is an ideal world where people are allowed to be lazy,[22] while some other creatures enjoy cleaning, washing, mending, even mining. Work is here separated into ''daily'' work, the commerce and trade pursued by human elites, and ''nocturnal'' work, the dirty jobs done by happy dwarfs out of sight. Does not all this remind us of the present-day dream of welfare society? If you belong to one of the ruling elites (e.g. if you are a *citizen* of one of the West European States) you can be relaxed and even lazy, and believe that the state, not the dwarfs, is taking care of everything. The dwarfs are a big secret, today's illegal migrant workers—do not try to discover who is cleaning your office during the night, they might be gone again.

This interpretation of the fairy-tale has taken us back again to the history of labor migration in Europe. The praxis of exploiting others was nothing new historically; the attempt to hide this fact however was new with the rise of capitalism. This complex system of the production of material goods and accumulation of abstract money value cannot exist without the constant flow of human labor. In the beginning, it was enough to use ''domestic'' cheap labor, but with the rise of the welfare state it has been seen as something that should be avoided: hence the import of temporary foreign labor for all the dirty jobs the dominant majority did not want to do anymore.

In this fantasy, dwarfs are seen as being without a family, we can imagine them living in some shelters away from the city, waiting for the night to come when they can enjoy their happiness in work. We could go even further and say that the problem arose when these ''dwarfs'' decided to bring their families with them: but family life is something reserved only for humans.[23] Wanting to become part of the society they (believe to) live in, wanting to become visible, was something that spoiled the game. After a few decades, it seems that we have a new generation of half-humans, half-dwarfs, but the constant need for ''real'' dwarfs is still present. However, if you are a human you need not worry—the state is taking care of prolonging this dream. If your illegal cleaning lady turns out to be a doctor from some unknown Third World country, do not worry—you can get a replacement soon. The system will survive, and the fantasy supporting and justifying it actions has to be maintained. Just do not forget—never ask who is working while you are asleep, it could spoil everything.

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[22] This is especially interesting because the most dominant stereotype about Germans depicts them as highly disciplined people and very devoted to their work.
[23] ''The guest-worker approach in Germany explicitly excluded integration, and thus entered in conflict with family reunification'' (Sassen 144).

Conclusion, Or: Discover the Other

The strategy that has been used in the fairy-tale about dwarfs to destroy the existing system of production was the revealing of their identity: This is the same strategy you should use if you want to make friends of your enemies; it seems impossible to hate people whose human side you learn to see. In that sense, this paper is an attempt to bring a human story into the midst of academic interest, giving the human face and human needs to all these ''dwarfs.''

In the past few years, some theoreticians have suggested an exploration of the concept of nomadism and nomads as a way of creating an identity that will undermine or change the modernistic notion of fixed, stable, settled identities. Or, as Jef Huysmans has explained: ''Analyzing migration by revealing dominant subtexts, by thinking in the codes of mobility rather than sedimentarity, or by putting the stranger, the cosmopolitan and the nomad at the heart of the analysis, the analyst writes about the world in a critical way.'' Further, Zygmunt Bauman sees our world today as a nomadic one, ''the universe of migration—of commodities and, increasingly people'' (693). His postmodern nomads ''wander between unconnected places'' and their identities are '''momentary' identities, identities 'for today', until-further-notice identities. Nomads do not bind time/space, they move through it; and so they move *through* identities'' (694). The weakness of this concept is that it offers maybe too romantic a picture of people. It sees people as free to travel, free to move wherever they want, in groups or individually. In the case of Europe, the question we should try to answer is: Who travels today? Or, who has the right to travel today? From the perspective of Western citizens *everyone can travel*, but from the perspective of the rest of Europe that is not the case. The reason for this is usually not economic but the existence of degrading visa procedures requiring proof that an applicant is human enough to join the European club of free travelers.

In the history of the nomadic tribes of the Balkans, we can see that they were forced to begin this way of life up in the mountains, running away from much stronger tribes invading their land in various historic periods. Once they would find a safe peace of land, they would return to a settled life.[24] In the case of postmodern nomads, they are also forced to move, to travel somewhere where their pure survival will not be threatened. In the case of the Wallachians, they were forced to move and look for some better life opportunities. The Western concept of nomads still carries the separation of nomads and settlers, seeing nomads as temporary visitors who will be able to leave soon, after finishing their work for the settlers. The example of the Roma people who

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[24] Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives following definition of the word nomad: ''a member of a people who have no fixed residence but move from place to place usually seasonally and within a well-defined territory.'' We would like to underline ''a well-defined territory'' as a proven fact and an important thing to know. They do not just wander around the world, their territory is maybe bigger than the area of a village, but it is still a closed circle.

were/are the oldest nomad tribes of Europe shows us that they were never really integrated in the communities amongst which they lived, always seen as alien nomadic tribes that are about to leave soon.

There is one lesson we should learn from examining the ''nomads'' or, in our case, the Wallachians. Their identity is not a ''momentary'' one, nor do they move trough identities. Their identity could be described as a flexible one, and maybe could be seen as a product of their nomadic past. They do not have a nation state but they have not lost their cultural or ethnic identity. Never having proceeded into the modernist project of creating a nation state, they are actually one of the least violent ethnic groups in the Balkans, preserving their identity in other ways, intelligently and without fearing to appropriate elements of surrounding cultures, translating them into their own language and their own system. They do not need newspapers to keep their language alive. Seen as a metaphor, they exist as a benevolent virus that has no interest in destroying the system it lives in.

The project ''We are all nomads'' maybe carries the danger of placing these people somewhere where they should not be. The ideal scenario of their life was to create a safe and secure home, not the decades-long nomadic way of modern life. But specific circumstances and the seduction of material prosperity have brought them to a stage when the accumulation of capital has become their priority. The tragic reality of empty houses in their homeland is something they will have to accept and solve themselves.

As we have seen, the reason for this lifestyle was not intellectual curiosity, the desire to learn something new, nor a simple play with identity, but the suffering of everyday life: The majority of these people would be happier to stay in the safety of the known world in they were brought up. The fantasy of happy workers coming from some imaginary land just to make us happy and idle was not created by the dwarfs, but by the people living in the heart of capitalism. Therefore it is understandable why this system would never discover the real truth about the dwarfs—they are humans too. They have their virtues and vices, their own fears and dreams; but they are humans as much as their masters. We can only hope that this story about Wallachians will be seen as an attempt to tell a different story about ''dangerous'' East Europeans. A truly cosmopolitan democratic society is not possible with this fantasy of *Heinzelmännchen*: We have to ask who is cleaning our offices and making our shoes.

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