



Between Socialist Modernity and Liquid Modernity. Vesna Goldsworthy's Memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries*

Gabriele Linke

HCM 7: 244–270

DOI: 10.18352/hcm.556

Abstract

In modernity studies, there has been an ongoing debate about different forms and phases of modernity. Eastern and Western Europe present special cases in this debate because modernity developed unevenly, and differences became particularly obvious after World War II. While the 'Eastern bloc' strove for socialist modernity, Western Europe continued its route of classic capitalist modernity, soon entering the state of late, or liquid modernity, of which fluid and fragmented identities were a defining feature. These conceptions of modernity have been reflected upon in the life narratives of people who experienced different modernities, of which Vesna Goldsworthy's memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* is a compelling example. She grew up in Yugoslavia's socialist modernity but, at the age of twenty-five, left for Britain, where she became a journalist and literary scholar. A close reading of her memoir reveals that she emphasizes the similarity of Western classic and Yugoslav socialist modernities but also constructs herself as a cosmopolitan subject with the flexible identity typical of liquid modernity.

Keywords: Ambivalence, autobiography, Eastern European identity, 'socialist' modernity, migration

Introduction

Since 1989, the dissolution of the socio-political system of the Eastern bloc has shaped European history, and ideological battles over the state-socialist past have been fought among historians, politicians and in the field of literature and life writing. Differing narratives about life in the Eastern bloc have competed for attention and acceptance, many of them addressing not only the peculiarities of life in the Eastern bloc as compared with Western Europe, but also the historical cultural and social features that were shared among Europeans across the boundaries of nations and blocs, including the question of a shared modernity.

It has been argued that both the ‘West’ and ‘Eastern Europe’ have been shaped by modernity but that their modernities have taken different forms.¹ The close connection between the modernity of state socialism² and Enlightenment ideas, and the industrial-technological basis associated with modernity in general have been widely acknowledged, enabling Leslie Holmes to state that ‘[i]n theory, communists were quintessentially modern’.³ Larry Ray proffers the logical conclusion that if communism was the epitome of modernity, then the crisis of communism may be understood as an indication of a general crisis of modernity.⁴ However, he personally prefers the interpretation that the crisis of communism ‘opened up new terrains of struggle *for* modernity’, brought to view latent tensions within modernity and created new opportunities for modernity.⁵ It can be concluded that people’s experiences of modernity since the end of World War II have borne some fundamental resemblance across different political systems, from Western-style democracy through the peculiarly changeable Yugoslav socialism to Stalinist totalitarianism. While not implying that the different political systems had no impact on people’s lives, this assumption may resolve the binary opposition of Western and Eastern bloc modernity.

This article will start with some general considerations regarding theories of modernity, then proceed to test the assumption of a basic resemblance of experiences of modernity across different systems with the help of a memoir whose author, Vesna Goldsworthy, lived through different modernities in Yugoslavia and Britain in the twentieth century, and has reflected on them in her autobiographical writing. After a brief

introduction to the author and her memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* (2005), a close reading of the text will explore her perception of different modernities and their relation.

European Modernity after World War II: Positions and Problems

The study of modernity has evolved as an interdisciplinary field headed, in terms of the development of theories and approaches at least, by historians and social scientists. In literature and the arts, more attention has been paid to modernism as an aesthetic style which emerged in the early twentieth century. This article, though it deals with a literary text, will focus less on literary form and more on Goldsworthy's perception of socialist and Western modernity as construed in her memoir. A brief excursion into current debates among modernity scholars will deliver a framework for discussion.

As has been pointed out repeatedly, various schools of thought have developed regarding modernity, and socialist modernity in particular.⁶ This study does not endeavour to support any one of these schools but rather to inspect existing positions for conceptions of modernity that may offer productive routes to a deeper understanding of Goldsworthy's construction of modernity in *Chernobyl Strawberries*.

In his review of modernity scholarship focussing on Russia and the Soviet Union, Michael David-Fox points out that some scholars, for example Sheila Fitzpatrick, have recently suggested that the stereotype of modernity based exclusively on Western parliamentary democracy and market economy is not adequate and that there are important alternative forms, such as Soviet modernity.⁷ Marie-Janine Calic, Dietmar Neutatz and Julia Obertreis agree that there are different kinds of modernity, including a capitalist 'industrial modernity' and a 'socialist modernity' which can be seen as 'a variant of industrial modernity'.⁸ Although socialist modernity shares with Western modernity its origin in the ideas of the Enlightenment and in the 'profound transformation of traditional agrarian societies into fully developed industrial ones', it differs from Western modernity in having 'achieved progress and development through dictatorial means'⁹ and with the assistance of Marxist-Leninist propaganda. Although 'socialist modernity' shared with the Western

variant certain principles such as ‘secularisation, the claim for universal validity of ideas and the conviction of the transformability of society, people and nature’ as well as ideas of linear progress, rapid change and social interventionism,¹⁰ it can still be seen as ‘a version of modernity in its own right’, not only an attempt to copy the material achievements of Western modernity.¹¹ What Stuart Hall calls ‘the formation of the “discourse” of “the West and the Rest”’¹² corresponds to the common perception that the two systems and their versions of modernity are to be distinguished clearly because they are dichotomous.¹³

This simple dichotomy, however, has been questioned fundamentally by recent scholarship, while the existence of multiple modernities has been acknowledged increasingly. The ‘notoriously elusive concept’ of modernity has not been rendered any simpler or more graspable by the assumption of the existence of multiple modernities; rather, the idea of multiple modernities ‘at once resolves and complicates dilemmas already implicitly raised by the modernity paradigm’.¹⁴ Yanni Kotsonis lists various paradoxes of modernity and concludes that ‘paradox is intrinsic to modernity’ of any kind, Soviet or Western.¹⁵ He furthermore claims that differences between the various manifestations of modernity in East and West can only be identified within the ‘shared comparative framework of European modernity’.¹⁶ The discussion of conceptions of modernity in Goldsworthy’s memoir rests on exactly this assumption: as a cosmopolitan having experienced both socialist and Western modernity, Goldsworthy locates herself and her perceptions in a European context.

Modernity has predominantly been defined through political and economic structures, but it is also possible to focus on the features of people and cultures. In terms of the political sphere, modernity has not only been equated with parliamentary democracy but also with the rise of mass politics and an ethos of social intervention and social engineering. This aspect of modernization had the down-side of erasing a local past in a war on backwardness, alienating individuals and communities, and creating urban, mobile and flexible populations.¹⁷ Uprootedness and mobility are thus features of modernity in general and not of late modernity in particular, and they apply, albeit in different forms and to different degrees, to both Western and socialist modernity.

Concentrating largely on the communist era, David-Fox identifies both measurable markers of modernization and abstract, ontological

shifts, associating the latter with phenomena such as rebellion against tradition and a ‘panoply of ambitious projects to remake society, culture, and man’.¹⁸ The various projects to refashion society and humans are inherent in the different versions of modernity though, again, in different forms. Calic, Neutatz and Obertreis confirm David-Fox’s view by arguing that socialist modernity corresponds with Western modernity in that it also encompasses features such as ‘the conviction of the transformability of society, people and nature’.¹⁹ With regard to Yugoslavia after 1945, they observe that socialism ‘committed itself explicitly to the attempt to introduce modernity by comprehensive social intervention, assisted by massive “agitprop” machinery’.²⁰ There are, nevertheless, noticeable differences among the socialist countries as their routes to modernity started at different times, under differing economic and socio-cultural conditions, and were followed at different speeds. Yugoslavia, for example, was an exception in the Eastern bloc in that it maintained special relations with the West and ‘integrated liberal bourgeois values, principles and practices into its modernization strategy, including – within limits – a market economy and private property, consumerism as a fetish and freedom of movement’.²¹ The diverse forms of socialist modernity may serve as one more example of how a closer look at seemingly clear dichotomies reveals ambivalence and multiplicity. Individual responses to socialist and Western capitalist modernity, from longings to loathings, are bound to come up in narrative constructions of the self in autobiographical writing and are at the core of narrative constructions of the self in late-modern post-communist Europe.

Various studies have confirmed that socialist and capitalist states in Cold War Europe were deeply entangled – not only politically but also, for example, through international cooperation, cultural exchanges and the importation of popular culture, which Francesca Rolandi has explored with regard to the influence of Italian popular culture on Yugoslavia.²² Such studies provide arguments for the view that socialist and Western ‘capitalist’ modernities were not only different instances of the same fundamental condition of modernity but that even at the time of the Cold War division of Europe into two camps, they were marked by exchanges and connections at all levels of social life. Consequently, this study of Goldsworthy’s memoir will test the assumption that there are multiple modernities (and not only Western modernity), and that

modernity is a contradictory process involving different phases, rather than a static condition. The latter phenomenon will be discussed in the next section.

Into Liquid Modernity

When Goldsworthy wrote her memoir in the early 2000s, it was from a position in late modernity. Although she does not theorize in her memoir about modernity and postmodernity, reading her text as a negotiation of experiences of different forms of modernity requires that the concepts are clarified beforehand. This makes a brief digression into the conceptions of different phases of modernity necessary, and while the tremendous body of literature on this subject, and on cultural postmodernism in particular, cannot be reviewed here, a few key issues will be discussed that contribute to the theoretical framework for the discussion of Goldsworthy's memoir.

There is a connection between the supposed development of multiple modernities in the twentieth century, especially since 1945, and the classification of post-1970s Western modernity either as a different stage in or a complete break with classical modernity. Proponents of a separate postmodern era, such as Fredric Jameson, emphasize fragmentation, discontinuities, self-reflexivity and a preference for excess, play, carnival etc. as the new modes of thinking and representation, and reject universalism, essentialism, grand narratives and the belief in progress. As the reading suggested here does not approach the memoir as an instance of postmodern aesthetics but explores the complex representations of different modernities in Goldsworthy's life narrative, the focus here will not be on cultural postmodernism. It appears more appropriate to view the time since the 1970s as a new stage of modernity, in line with arguments by, for example, Ulrich Beck and Christoph Lau, who speak of a second or reflexive modernity in which the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in classical modernity surface anew.²³

The problem with drawing clear-cut distinctions between first and second modernity (and postmodernity) becomes obvious when it comes to issues such as migration and uprootedness, for example, which are central to Goldsworthy's memoir. Although migration is intricately interwoven with industrialization, a core process of classical

modernization that required a mobile workforce, migration and flexible identities have also been identified as phenomena of reflexive modernity. Stuart Hall emphasizes that modernity 'is not only defined as the experience of living with rapid, extensive, and continuous change, but is a highly reflexive form of life ...'.²⁴ For a mobile population, self-reflexivity may function as an attempt to impose order (by employment or other means) or struggle with the ambivalence and messiness of life in late modernity.

In her study of contemporary migration biographies, Elisabeth Scheibelhofer argues that, while industrial society is still largely based on traditional forms of living such as the nuclear family and social classes, these forms have been dissolving. Industrial society has become unsettled 'in the course of "reflexive modernization" and due to individuals being released from traditional relationships'.²⁵ Thus liberated, individuals become both the result and the producer of their living situations, as well as the authors of their own life narratives, which are often pieced together like bricolage.²⁶ Scheibelhofer agrees with Ulrich Beck and Christoph Lau²⁷ that there has not been a clear break between first and second modernity regarding the principles of modernity, but that while first modernity is ordered by dichotomies and set boundaries and standards, these ordering principles are eroded in second modernity and replaced by plurality, fluidity and ambiguity.²⁸ In the process of social structures dissolving, new distinctions and boundaries do emerge, but these are much more provisional, flexible and open to change. Klaus Müller observes with regard to transformations in Eastern Europe since 1990 that these processes also involved a questioning of the concept of order, that is, 'the normative horizon of classical modernization theory',²⁹ and called into doubt accepted boundaries and the steering capacity of politics. However, these and other phenomena such as the fragmentation of society, unpredictable events, non-linearity, multiculturalism and identity politics are features which post-socialist postmodernity shares with Western European postmodernity and international relations.³⁰ Although Müller uses the term 'postmodernity', he argues for a revision of theories of modernization in order to address the tensions internal to the Western pattern itself.³¹

The concept of a second or reflexive modernity overlaps with Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity.³² Bauman uses the

term ‘liquid modernity’ to refer to the ‘currently existing shape of the modern condition, described by other authors as “postmodernity”, “late modernity”, “second” or “hyper” modernity’.³³ As this paper will be based on the general idea of a changing modernity which has been transforming from its ‘solid’ to its ‘liquid’ phase,³⁴ rather than work with the postmodernist assumption of a fundamental break between modernity and postmodernity, Bauman’s term appears most fitting for our purposes. In liquid modernity, no form of life maintains its shape for long, and culture, Bauman argues, now focuses on fulfilling individual needs and resolving struggles in personal lives.³⁵ Migrants assume a special place in second, or liquid, modernity. Through their migration itself as well as their self-reflexive negotiations of identity, they have partaken in the liquefaction of the rigid but increasingly brittle structures of the ‘heavy capitalism’³⁶ of which the Cold War blocs were but one expression. As Bauman argues, nomadic habits were out of favour throughout the ‘solid’ stage of the modern era but have emerged as a dominant pattern of liquid modernity.³⁷ Modern nomadism, then, entails permanent individual self-constructing labours that follow the twists and turns of life, which provides a relevant point of access for the study of migrants’ life narratives in late modernity.

Vesna Goldsworthy’s memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* fits into this framework of socialist and liquid modernity and the nomadic and self-reflexive individual because she covers her life in Eastern and Western European countries, Yugoslavia and Britain in particular. She renegotiates her sense of belonging under the conditions of liquid modernity. I will look at her text as a response to modernity but also explore how she constructs modernities in her life narrative. Beside and beyond an analysis of constructions of modernity in Goldsworthy’s memoir, this study provides a discussion of how and to what effect Goldsworthy represents her life in terms of the liquid modernity that has affected both post-communist and Western countries.

Post-Communist Life Writing, Identity and Modernity

One starting point of a search for theoretical trajectories between modernity and post-communist life writing may be found in the modern obsession with the categorization and ordering of the world. As

Zygmunt Bauman has pointed out, the task of imposing order has been one of the more impossible undertakings modernity set for itself, and the order 'of the world, of the human habitat, of the human self, and of the connection between all three' has often been the subject of conscious reflection.³⁸ Baumann sees the struggle for order as one directed against ambivalence and in favour of clear categories, but concedes that ambivalence has grown and that order has become a problem as a result of ordering practices, which in turn have become a matter of power.³⁹ This conflict between order and ambivalence has also resulted in competing conceptions of identity as a clear-cut, essentializing category on the one hand, and a hybrid, shifting one on the other.

Bauman's analysis of modernity and order also addresses the effects of modernity on human self-perception: '[c]onsciousness is modern in as far as it reveals ever new layers of chaos underneath the lid of power-assisted order'.⁴⁰ On the one hand, the striving for social order results in differences and dichotomies such as 'stranger' and 'native', 'foreigner' and 'state subject', 'them' and 'us', with an asymmetrical dependence between the opposites. On the other hand, ambivalence arises as modernity's 'most genuine worry and concern'.⁴¹ Bauman discusses the 'notoriously ambivalent category of strangers' as a product of order-building and concludes that 'the strangers' only realistic project is that of embracing their ambivalent standing, with all its pragmatic and philosophical consequences'; the 'assimilation project', he argues, spawns more ambivalence and contingency, which become the human condition's lasting features.⁴²

The obsession with order that characterizes modernity also clashes with the nomadic way of life that emerged most strongly after the break-down of the Eastern bloc and with the transformation of some ('old') capitalist institutions. Bauman's 'liquefied patterns of human interaction and dependency' in a 'liquid modernity'⁴³ are a metaphor for the loss of the old certainties and clear categories that marked the situation and characterized life especially, though not only, in the countries of the former Eastern bloc. As liquid modernity is connected with mobility, the 'stranger' is part of it but has taken various shapes. The figure of the late-modern nomad with its positive connotation of joyful discontinuity,⁴⁴ for example, has emerged in this context, and while it may be suitable for some Eastern European life stories, the concept of the migrant is more appropriate for others as it has acquired a

multiplicity of meanings, including not only new opportunities but also experiences of uprootedness, powerlessness, exclusion and the pressure to assimilate. The universal condition of rootlessness that Bauman describes with reference to the German sociologist Nikolaus Luhmann, of being a universal stranger and inhabiting divergent social worlds, is repeatedly reflected in migrants' life narratives since the self faces the permanent task of integrating divergent worlds and re-imagining selfhood.⁴⁵

Vesna Goldsworthy's text can be anchored within this framework of order, dichotomies and ambivalence as it reflects on the changing location of the self and addresses the ambivalence of the category of the stranger, the assimilation project and the (socially constructed and questionable) dichotomy between East and West since the 1960s. As Ann Rigney puts it with regard to the European project and past attempts to formulate a European master narrative, 'travelling, cosmopolitan and multidirectional' memories are valuable strategies to 'conceptualize memory outside national frames'.⁴⁶

Here we need to return briefly to the concept of identity as one that denotes such attempts to imagine the self. Stuart Hall notices a shift in late modernity from a formerly stable sense of self to a fragmented, decentred and constantly transforming identity.⁴⁷ National identities are being eroded and strengthened (by resistance to globalization) at the same time, while local, particularistic and hybrid identities have been gaining ground.⁴⁸ However, despite these tendencies, a strategic essentialism⁴⁹ needs to be employed in analytical work at times to make possible the discussion of national or 'Eastern European' identities. The categories are used here as discursive tools, still implying fluidity and inner diversity.

Autobiographical and biographical texts have reached an unprecedented level of popularity in the late modern era, and since the 1990s in particular. One explanation for this may be the rapid changes in political, economic and social structures and their effect of unhinging individual lives while transforming public and private discourses. Such developments have increased ambivalence in areas such as politics, sexual orientation, and 'race' and ethnicity. The struggle with the dichotomy of 'Eastern' and 'Western' Europe in the post-communist period in Europe can be seen as part of the negotiations between clear

and hybrid, stable and fluid categories which can be expressed in self-reflexive life writing.

Goldsworthy's Construction of Yugoslav Modernities

Vesna Goldsworthy was born in Belgrade in 1961 and spent her childhood and youth in Yugoslavia, going on to study French literature there. In 1986 she left the country for Britain to marry a young Englishman she had met at a summer school in Sofia. In Britain, she took a series of jobs as a journalist and eventually became a literary scholar and writer. In the early 2000s, when undergoing treatment for cancer, she wrote a memoir entitled *Chernobyl Strawberries*, which, she claims, was not intended to be 'a book about cancer' but 'about London and Belgrade, about the Serbian and English families' to which she belongs.⁵⁰ The memoir offers itself for a study of modernities because Goldsworthy is an academic memoirist who writes at a high level of reflexivity compared with other autobiographers whose strengths are, for example, humorous anecdotes and colourful descriptions.⁵¹

As she has lived in both socialist and late capitalist modernity, she is in a position to compare her observations on forms of modernity and establish differences and similarities. Her reflections are particularly noteworthy and distinctive because what she left behind is not just a country but a whole historical transnational socio-political system, the Eastern bloc. Thus she reflects not only on her own country's past, but on European socialist modernity, and she does so from the critical perspective of a journalist and literary scholar. In her negotiation of belonging and her reconstructions of self, she navigates between narratives of East-West difference and narratives of likeness and belonging, as well as between narratives of homogeneity and narratives of diversity within the systems and kinds of modernity. For the writer who left an Eastern bloc country to live in Western Europe, this means that she has to find ways to recount her life looking (back) East from the West. The task involves the re-construction and re-evaluation of socialist modernity from the position of someone looking back in from the outside, and simultaneously someone looking around in her chosen new environments, comparing and combining.

Attempting to understand the construction of modernity in her memoir, I realized that rather than just recounting her childhood and youth in Yugoslavia, her migration to the United Kingdom and the various phases of her life after this move, Goldsworthy also reflects on the experience of her transition from socialist modernity in the Yugoslavia of the 1960s and 1970s to Western modernity in Britain in the 1980s and after. The question arose as to whether she understood this transition as a move from a less modern to a more modern country, or whether she saw herself as moving between two different but modern cultures. I also wondered to what extent she located herself, and can be located, in late, or liquid, modernity. In what follows, I discuss the relationship between socialist and capitalist, or Western, modernity with the help of the intimate knowledge of both systems and the comparisons between them that Goldsworthy offers in her memoir. While since World War II modernization has often been equated with Westernization,⁵² Goldsworthy's life narrative of East and West, Yugoslavia and Britain, appears to support David-Fox's claim that recent scholarship has loosened the 'conceptual links between modernity and the West'.⁵³

The multiple alignments of Goldsworthy's life are already present when, in the second sentence of her memoir, she mentions the 'winds from Ukraine' that bring rain to the strawberry fields near Belgrade. In 1986, 'the year of Chernobyl' and of her 'move to England', she remembers the strawberries as being as fragrant as ever, but, by establishing a connection between Ukraine, Chernobyl and Belgrade, between Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, she deftly captures the contradictory influences of the East, and the USSR in particular, on Yugoslavia, recipient of both nurturing rain and the radioactive precipitation implied in the concept of Chernobyl (1).⁵⁴ By starting with 1986, marked as 'the year of Chernobyl and the spring before the summer of my move to England', she introduces her transition from one country to another and from one modernity to another as the central theme of her life narrative. Later, she adds that she made strawberry jam in 1986 but did not take a single jar of this jam to England (29). She immediately questions this metaphorical act of leaving everything Eastern behind, asking, 'Or did I?' and musing that it was not clear if the strawberries had been radioactive (29) (and the Eastern influence damaging). Her metaphorical negotiation of the impact of the East and of her own idea of having

left it behind concludes with the suspicion that her clean break was only imagined, that she probably did take some things with her and that not everything is likely to have been contaminated. This attests to her insight into the complexity and ambiguity of Eastern (socialist) influences in her life and into the continuities and connections running through phases of life that seemed detached from each other.

Nevertheless, Goldsworthy gains a distance from Yugoslavia which is cast in terms of time as well as space. Revisiting it from a 'distance of twenty years and well over a thousand miles', she is able to see that the 'socialist experiment' she has departed from is also a 'social order' (2). Locating her memoirist self after and outside of socialist Yugoslavia, she reconstructs it as the social environment of her youth and portrays her young self as being entangled in this society. While conceding that she was certainly no dissident and did not leave via a dangerous escape route, she emphasizes her familiarity and attachment to Western popular culture and modernity by including anecdotes about smuggling some French LPs of chansons by Georges Brassens and others from Paris into Yugoslavia. The rise of an international, largely global generational youth culture has been described as a form of enculturation of modernity,⁵⁵ and Goldsworthy certainly sees Yugoslavia and herself as partaking in these developments.

Her assessment of socialist Yugoslavia shows a keen awareness of socialist modernity as part of the 'solid' stage of modernity. She even asks how 'something that seemed so solid' as Yugoslav state socialism could disappear so easily (4). Goldsworthy experienced the power of the 'authoritarian state' in the rituals of a border control, expressing in small scenes such as this the rigidity of the institutions of socialist modernity. She describes the socialist world of her youth as 'dull and stable as something out of a nineteenth century bourgeois play' (9–10), capturing in this comparison the 'solid' industrial capitalist class structure and class conflict associated with first modernity. It is striking that she links 1960s and 1970s socialist modernity with nineteenth century capitalist modernity, somehow alluding to the argument that the socialist transformation in most Eastern European states brought industrialization to the backward agrarian societies and with it developments towards (first) modernity.

Since she perceived Yugoslav modernity mainly as stable and solid, she is almost disappointed at the speed of the transformation process which takes place in the 1990s, but with this insight also acknowledges

that modernity, even Yugoslav socialist modernity, was ever evolving and ready to enter a new phase, never having been fully apart from capitalist modernity and its development into second modernity. This becomes particularly obvious when she describes how the pressure exerted by the International Monetary Fund on Yugoslavia to repay its foreign debt in the 1980s led to a rapid decline in the prosperity of the population (6), indicating how the country was interwoven with the Western economic system and dependent on it.

Besides characterizing socialist Yugoslavia as a solid system, she also includes in her narrative the country's post-World War II route into fully-fledged first, industrial modernity. In 1961 Goldsworthy's own family moved from poverty and life in two earth-floored rooms with an outdoor water tap and lavatory to a better, and later an 'enormous' New House. As Goldsworthy explicitly equates her family's initial poverty with that of her country (5), their move from plain traditional rural to luxurious urban housing may be read as a metaphor of pre-war agrarian Yugoslavia's catching up with capitalist first modernity through industrialization and modernization. Goldsworthy herself suggests that the New House represented 'an idea rather than an edifice' (7), her parents' dream of a large extended family and prosperity, a belief in progress. She encapsulates the rapid modernization process in which her family partook in the phrase that they moved 'from being shepherds to skiers in three generations' (8), skiing holidays iconically representing the middle-class lifestyle of modernity.

Goldsworthy does not give the impression that modernity started with Yugoslav socialism but mentions 'pre-war industrial edifices in the style of the European Modern Movement' (11) and the pre-war urbanization of peasants to indicate that industrialization started earlier. Woven into Goldsworthy's comprehensive reflections on the genealogy of her family are references to the relatively stable life of labouring people in the first half of the twentieth century on the one hand, and on the other to the extremely changeable political situation, wars, restlessness and mixing of nationalities that characterized Yugoslavia's history (13–17). Her contemplation of her ancestors' roots and routes points to the continuity of basic processes of modernity: Goldsworthy does not find her own movements any more unusual than any of her ancestors', 'at least not since they decided to leave the mountain ranges of the Balkans and get going' (20). This getting going turns out to be

her family's history of early twentieth century migrations, not only in the Balkans but also to the United States, resulting in Montana and Montenegro becoming the 'mythical poles' (21) of her family's world. As a keen observer of her family history, Goldsworthy also recognizes the more recent development of women migrating, studying and marrying abroad, adding so many new branches to the family tree that her English in-laws are 'hardly outlandish' (22).

Reviewing Goldsworthy's introduction to her family history, it appears that she describes Yugoslav modernity as something that developed throughout the twentieth century, displaying typical features such as urbanization, industrialization and a greatly mobile population that moved from the country to the city and to workplaces in other countries. As she recounts a boost in opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s and then stagnation and decline due to the IMF's measures from the 1980s onwards, she recognizes that Yugoslavia participated in the events and processes of modernization in Europe and beyond, and that its modernity was deeply linked with Western modernity even after World War II. On the other hand, she acknowledges the specificity of socialist modernity in Yugoslavia. The picture she paints of her native country is composed of anecdotes about, for example, the celebration of International Women's Day (42), her school excursions to cheer Tito and his various guests (109–110), her tightly controlled poetry reading on TV, her national defence training (69–71) and her brief time as a member of the Communist Party (64, 75–77). The rigid structures and centralized control of political, educational and media institutions and events represent the solid aspects of Yugoslav socialist modernity, a modernity which also shaped the life of Goldsworthy's mother, who is described as a person who stayed in her job, town and marriage throughout her adult life (53). This kind of stability is one feature of first modernity.

Goldsworthy, however, balances her stories of encounters with (superficially) solid state socialism with stories of resistance, diversity and links to the West as well as her own volatile affiliations and loyalties. Family memories of agricultural collectivization, the social and physical costs of her maternal grandfather's resistance to it, the subsequent impoverishment of her mother's family and her maternal grandfather's cursing of Tito and communism (51–52) are also included. In this context, she mentions her own ambivalent and changeable attitudes towards Tito and the Communist Party and

retrospectively reads her joining of the Communist Party as an early step in her ‘career of not belonging’ (75): she became a Party member at a time and in a social environment where people tended not to join, and even her own father, a ‘reluctant communist’ (65), advised her against it. Two years later, she dropped out of the Party. These tales of her childhood and youth in socialist Yugoslavia reveal a deep ambivalence regarding her own entanglement in socialism and highlight her and her family’s blend of positive and negative attitudes to and experiences of Yugoslav socialism. They contradict a simplified image of solid socialist modernity and proffer a view in which Yugoslavia undergoes first modernity industrialization and urbanization and experiences the rigid structures of the socialist stage of modernization on the one hand, yet maintains close links with capitalist modernity and experiences a social and spatial mobility that permits an evolution into second, liquid, modernity on the other.

At the level of values, culture and education, Goldsworthy also emphasizes similarities and continuities between different forms of modernity and between East and West. Even in her youth she is able to travel quite freely in Europe, and as a student of literature, aspiring poet and speaker of French and English she not only reads widely in European literature but also meets literary visitors to Belgrade such as John Updike, Allen Ginsberg and Czeslaw Milosz, whose attention creates in her the ‘illusion’, as she self-critically remarks, that she is part of the wide literary world (172–173). In the field of artistic production at least, she finds the Yugoslav élites participating fully in modernity as well as modernism.

There are, however, more instances where Goldsworthy portrays her youth in Yugoslavia as being deeply entangled with Western thought and culture. One example of her dismantling of East-West binarism is her interpretation of the film *Dr Zhivago*. She observes that ‘the Great Russian Soul, as sieved through the quintessentially English melancholic view of history, was absolutely irresistible’ and that ‘[t]he English played the Russians with the respect and care’ that indicated that ‘one Empire was nodding to another’ (67). Although Goldsworthy mentions her membership in the Communist Party, she characterizes her own communism as ‘the stuff of Hollywood fantasy in which tall men and slim, bookish women argued passionately’, of illegally printed leaflets and brutal police – a communism that held no room for Stalin

and Marxist theory (68). When she declares that the ‘West was clearly in love with its enemy, and [that she] understood that love story perfectly well’ because it was ‘underpinned by the same longing for simplicity, sharing and self-denial’ that now makes the British buy Birkenstock sandals (69), she depicts her own brand of communist beliefs as youthful, harmless and romantic and likens them to those held by romantic communists in the West, establishing an ideological closeness and staking a claim to membership in a transnational romantic communism which has been part of modernity in general. Even the very notion of a romantic communism presupposes a shared system of ideas characteristic of modernity and its Enlightenment roots.

Goldsworthy also confesses that she ‘entertained the very Western idea that [her] first responsibility is towards [her] own happiness’, disregarding her parents’ wish that she settle down and start a family (7). The point is that she phrases her pursuit of self-fulfilment as a ‘Western idea’, as a modern attitude and youthful selfishness that was shared across the East-West divide, dissolving clear boundaries between Yugoslav socialist and Western modernity. Her experience of social class in Yugoslavia is another case of shared modernity. On various occasions, she asserts that being young and middle class in Yugoslavia was very similar to being a middle-class youth in Western Europe, which later makes her claim convincingly that she felt at home in England ‘from the very first day’ (152). This commonality of experience also applies to values, or rather virtues, as she claims that her communist upbringing ‘certainly stood [her] in good stead’ in her working life because a ‘virtue is a virtue wherever you are, East or West. A transferable skill’ (39). The *déjà-vu* moments continue when she finds British austerity, bureaucracy, meetings and her grey university office strongly reminiscent of their counterparts in socialist Yugoslavia, and even her job at the university becomes so bureaucratized that it reminds her of her mother’s tedious office work (182–184).

Such constructions of belonging to transnational socio-cultural groups are particularly visible in her account of her youth, when she defines herself as ‘an ordinary bright girl in an ordinary middle-class world’ (3), born to ‘the original yuppies of the sixties’ boom’ (8), brought up with piano lessons and French, and attending an elitist secondary school which, she claims, ‘in today’s Britain would be called a city academy’ (71–72). I would argue that such instances of

writing her childhood and youth in terms of British (middle-class) culture, of translating and thus assimilating them into English concepts represent another strategy of foregrounding the commonality of experience and not only a rhetorical gesture towards her son and an English-speaking readership, although marketing strategies and ‘packaging the eastern post-communist “other” to meet western consumerist expectations’ may also have been a factor, as Ioana Luca critically remarks.⁵⁶ Goldsworthy frequently asserts that many of her experiences were more or less shared across Europe, and with Western Europe in particular, and that her relocation to Britain lacked any ‘existential drama’ or ‘cultural baggage’. Moreover, she refuses to define herself as an exile or refugee (36–37). This denial of any fundamental differences between socialist Yugoslavia and capitalist Britain due to their shared social, cultural and ideological structures forms a major premise of her view that the different modernities are simply variations of a general European modernity. Her recognition of the solid aspects specific to state-socialist modernity is countered by as well as reconciled with the general perception that Yugoslavia partook in many of the processes of first modernity and the transition to liquid modernity.

The Migrant Yugoslav, Identity and Liquid Modernity

Since Goldsworthy is an academic autobiographer familiar with current identity debates and literary criticism, she achieves a high level of reflexivity. Although she does not record the kind of lasting restlessness that other Eastern European writers such as Kapka Kassabova⁵⁷ suffer from, she, too, travels extensively and reflects explicitly – though monologically – on her various trajectories of belonging and the fluidity of identifications. Her reflections are also statements about the condition of (late) modernity in Yugoslavia, the UK and post-communist Europe. With regard to a sense of belonging to and within the Eastern bloc, she remembers that, as a young student on a research stay in Bulgaria, she ‘felt almost at home’ with the language, food and people, ‘but for that noticeable difference in atmosphere which (she) associated with being behind the Iron Curtain, in the Eastern Bloc proper’ (153). Clearly, it is essential for her narrative of identity

to distinguish between Yugoslavia and the 'Eastern Bloc proper', of which Bulgaria was part. Goldsworthy seems to be aware and proud that Yugoslavia was at the top of the unwritten hierarchy among the countries of the Eastern bloc with regard to prosperity and degree of freedom, a hierarchy which employed the concepts of Western modernity as a measure. Her keen observations attest to her noticing both East-West differences and differences within the Eastern bloc, as well as the ambivalent position occupied by Yugoslavia and her own ambivalent feelings of being both at home in and slightly outside the Eastern bloc.

However, as Goldsworthy leaves Yugoslavia behind, her ruminations about belonging and identity assume a new quality and urgency. While her concept of identification remains a dynamic one, she reflects repeatedly on her need to belong and the volatility of this need. After her arrival in Britain, she feels that being English and Serbian at the same time is the only way she will be happy (203), but later speaks of the 'fashionable, travelling, global postmodern subject' that she has created of herself (214). When reminiscing about married life in England, she claims that she became 'almost' English but loves the 'almost' because it means 'foreign, but not quite', clearly favouring ambiguity and flexibility over clear boundaries. The same sentiment is expressed in her enjoyment of 'reinventing' herself every day (150). She also notes that in some sense she 'remained an alien' because, coming herself from an often-colonized country, she could never fully grasp her father-in-law's nostalgia for India. However, she recognizes that she shares with him a homesickness and an awareness of multiple loyalties (221–222).

This changes again with her cancer diagnosis, which catapults her from being 'once happy in not belonging' to now wanting to 'be all in one place', longing for shelter and protection, and feeling English, for better or worse (261). The complexity of Goldsworthy's narrative politics of identification and of her relationships with Yugoslavia and the Balkan past also becomes evident when the Balkan War of the 1990s breaks out and, working for the BBC World Service,⁵⁸ she recognizes that despite her having become English in every possible way, there are still Serbian 'fault lines' in her emotional responses, her pain and her clinging to her mother tongue (214). As with her complex discussion of Yugoslav modernity, she does not maintain a binary opposition of identities between which she moves, but rather

ties her sense of identity to her social and emotional needs at different stages of her life, acknowledging the power of her Yugoslav socialization and mother tongue as undercurrents but also occasionally asserting 'I am English now' (3). Through the way she recounts the shifts in what or where she identifies with, she moves away from the more essentialist, solid conceptions of migrant identity in first modernity, passes through a phase in which she sees herself as a 'global post-modern subject' and finally arrives fully as a cosmopolitan in liquid modernity. Within this liquid, reflexive modernity, a return to a more unified identity is still possible, however, and even desirable in situations where the individual craves security, as Goldsworthy did during her cancer treatment.

In her 'Epilogue to the paperback edition', Goldsworthy recounts that after the publication of her memoir she received numerous letters, many of which offered 'personal histories of displacement' and came from readers 'whose notions of home can only ever be multiple'; here, in response to her readers, she acknowledges her kinship with refugees, migrants and displaced persons, although immediately afterwards, near the end of the book, she maintains that her own story is simply one of 'moving from one end of the continent to the other at the call of youthful love' (301), a move she more or less sailed through with the help of the virtues of the all-European educated middle class. By rejecting categories such as 'exile' or 'expatriate' for herself, she claims for her life story a late-modern cosmopolitan pan-European identity which simply incorporates her Eastern European socialization into her life narrative, resulting in the feeling that 'in its fragmented way, [her] life makes perfect sense' (283). Ioana Luca argues that, by catering to some extent to British expectations, 'Goldsworthy's life writing becomes a privileged space for enunciation and subversion, enabling a critical reconfiguration and reconceptualization of the inherent "otherness" of Communist and post-Communist Eastern Europe'.⁵⁹ In my reading, though, I have not found a clear 'inherent otherness' in Goldsworthy's flexible constructions of post-communist European identity. I do agree with Luca, however, that 'Goldsworthy does not provide a grand narrative of the demise of Yugoslavia, the kind discredited by postmodern critics like herself, but presents scattered bits of stories', painful and powerful.⁶⁰ In doing so, she acknowledges the lack of clarity and the abundance of ambiguity that mark liquid modernity.

At the level of form, Goldsworthy's memoir also represents reflexive liquid modernity, in perfect accordance with her confession that she studied poststructuralism and passionately supported postmodern writers while rejecting the realist, nationalist ones in 1980s Belgrade (171). She reflects explicitly on the non-linear form of her narrative, a form that for her is the only adequate expression of the workings of her memory, of the 'shifting vantage point' over the course of a life and the unstable, 'makeshift' meanings that result (286). In the face of death, during her cancer treatment, she embraces the dislocations, fractures, arrivals and departures of her life, concluding that fragmentation, shifts, moves and ambiguities are part of the condition of the world. She calls her memoir 'an imprint of individual memory' and 'not a faithful reconstruction of the past' (287), assigning it the qualities of a representation of reflexive modernity. Therefore I agree with Ioana Luca that Goldsworthy 'establishes difference from, rather than connections to, the tradition of the communist life stories' in her fragmented transnational narrative.⁶¹ Luca also observes that Goldsworthy occasionally exoticizes the Yugoslavia of her childhood and employs popular national clichés, hinting, in her accounts of family history, at its archaic and marginal nature and participating in the Othering of the Balkans⁶² that Goldsworthy the scholar⁶³ had critiqued. I would suggest that some of these old family stories are told with an ironic touch and from a temporal authorial distance, expressing her ambivalent attitude rather than full identification or intentional exoticization. Through such pieces of family lore, Goldsworthy alludes not only to a pre-modern Yugoslavia but also to the permanence of features such as migration and to Yugoslavia's rapid transformation into a modern country after World War II and its special brand of semi-socialist modernity.

Conclusion

In her memoir, Vesna Goldsworthy provides a retrospective autobiographical narrativization of Eastern European experiences before and after the political changes of the 1990s from her vantage point in England in the 2000s. Although a growing number of Eastern Europeans who moved to Britain and other Western countries have

written and are writing in English about their experiences in the Eastern bloc and their later transnational lives for a readership mainly outside of 'Eastern Europe', writing this kind of memoir poses particular challenges. Beside the general questions of identity and belonging raised by migration, the memoirist also has to negotiate similarities and differences between different countries and kinds of modernity.

With regard to her perception of Yugoslav socialist modernity and Western (British) modernity, Goldsworthy's narrative is largely ambivalent. While she recounts events and experiences peculiar to (Yugoslav) state socialism on the one hand, she frequently emphasizes the commonality of experience of, for example, a young person in the 1960s or a daughter of middle-class parents across the different countries and political blocs. In doing so she blurs the dividing lines between socialist and capitalist modernities and maintains an ambivalence with regard to clear distinctions. She reinforces this blur by likening her own experiences with British bureaucracy to her mother's with the Yugoslav brand and by commenting on the usefulness of some socialist virtues in the capitalist work place. With some incidents of migration in her family's history, she also illustrates the continuities between first and second modernity, never distinguishing clearly between them but rather combining them quite randomly in her fragmented life narrative. Her accounts of her different phases of identification as Yugoslav, English, both, or a travelling global postmodern subject, scattered throughout the memoir and evoked by changing circumstances, attest to her locating herself in the liquid modernity Zygmunt Bauman described, with its critical category of the strangers and their attempts to embrace their ambivalent standing. This in turn produces more ambivalence and contingency.

Goldsworthy saw herself as moving between two different but similarly modern cultures. However, through narrative fragmentation and ambivalent assessments, her memoir neither endorses dichotomous categories of (national) identity, nor does it attempt to formulate a new European master narrative. Instead, Goldsworthy constructs transnational, cosmopolitan memories, reflecting as she does so on the fluidity of identification throughout her life. The transnational character of her life and life narrative is closely connected with her conception of a transnational experience of both first and second modernity. Nevertheless, her memoir testifies to a permanent longing for order and

belonging, and to an ongoing quest for a community with which values, virtues and experiences are shared, and which transcends the authors' Eastern European roots. Goldsworthy's conception of the relationship between socialist and Western modernity has certainly been shaped by her life story and historical and social situatedness, but despite the references to differences, the overall frame is that of ambivalence and of values and cultural elements shared across politically constructed divides.

Goldsworthy's reflexive life writing is but one attempt to capture the complexities and ambivalences of the experience of a writer from the former Eastern bloc who went to live in the West. It may be due to the particular form of state socialism in Yugoslavia, her background as a middle-class academic and her migration as a middle-class wife that features of a shared European culture determine her assessment of socialist, capitalist and liquid modernity alike. Nation, class, gender, time and circumstances of migration have an impact on transnational life narratives of East and West and may result in much clearer perceptions of differences between modernities, as memoirs like Gazmend Kapllani's *A Short Border Handbook*⁶⁴ illustrate, although even Kapllani occasionally mentions connections. Goldsworthy's memoir, however, provides ample proof that the condition of modernity can be considered shared European heritage and a shared contemporary challenge.

Notes

- 1 That state-socialist systems were variants of modernity has been claimed, for example, by Larry Ray, 'Post-communism: postmodernity or modernity revisited?', *British Journal of Sociology* 48:4 (1997) 543–60, at 543.
- 2 Because in the body of scholarly writing regarding the social formation of the countries of the Eastern bloc the terminology differs vastly, the terms 'communist', 'socialist' and 'state-socialist' – and the respective nouns – will be used synonymously.
- 3 Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism. An Introduction* (Durham, 1997) 41.
- 4 Ray, 'Post-communism', 545.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 247–8.
- 6 See, for example, Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, 2015) 21–33.

- 7 David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, 21.
- 8 Marie-Janine Calic, Dietmar Neutatz and Julia Obertreis, 'The Crisis of Socialist Modernity – the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s', in Marie-Janine Calic, Dietmar Neutatz and Julia Obertreis (eds), *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity: The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s* (Göttingen, 2011) 7–27, at 9.
- 9 Ibid., 9.
- 10 Ibid., 11.
- 11 Ibid., 12.
- 12 Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in Stuart Hall et al. (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden MA, etc., 1996) 184–228, at 185.
- 13 It needs to be added here that globally seen, there are many more variants of modernity than just 'socialist' and 'Western European'.
- 14 David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, 22.
- 15 Yanni Kotsonis, 'Introduction', in David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (eds.), *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (Basingstoke, 2000) 1–18, at 3.
- 16 Ibid., 3.
- 17 David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, 23.
- 18 Ibid., 23–4.
- 19 Calic, Neutatz and Obertreis, 'The Crisis of Socialist Modernity', 11.
- 20 Ibid., 13.
- 21 Ibid., 15.
- 22 See Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen (eds), *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York, 2015) and in this collection, Francesca Rolandi, 'A Filter for Western Cultural Products: The Influence of Italian Popular Culture on Yugoslavia, 1955–65', 277–94.
- 23 Ulrich Beck and Christoph Lau, 'Second Modernity as a Research Agenda: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in the "Meta-Change" of Modern Society', *The British Journal of Sociology* 56:4 (2005) 525–57.
- 24 Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural identity', in Stuart Hall et al. (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden MA, etc., 1996) 594–634, at 599.
- 25 Elisabeth Scheibelhofer, 'Understanding European Emigration in the Context of Modernization Processes: Contemporary Migration Biographies and Reflexive Modernity', *Current Sociology* 57:1 (2009) 5–25, at 7.
- 26 Ibid., 8.

- 27 Beck and Lau, 'Second Modernity', 525-57.
- 28 Scheibelhofer, 'Understanding European Emigration', 8.
- 29 Klaus Müller, 'From Post-Communism to Post-Modernity? Economy and Society in Eastern European Transformations', in *Social Change and Modernization: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Berlin, etc., 1995) 265-293, at 285.
- 30 Ibid., 286-7.
- 31 Ibid., 287.
- 32 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, 2000).
- 33 Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge, 2011) 11
- 34 Ibid., 11.
- 35 Ibid., 11-2.
- 36 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 59.
- 37 Ibid., 187-8.
- 38 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge, 1991) 4-5.
- 39 Ibid., 5-6, 14.
- 40 Ibid., 9.
- 41 Ibid., 14, 15.
- 42 Ibid., 16.
- 43 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 6-8.
- 44 Cf. Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions. On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge, 2006) 169.
- 45 Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 95.
- 46 Ann Rigney, 'Transforming Memory and the European Project', *New Literary History* 43 (2012) 618.
- 47 Hall, 'The Question of Cultural identity', 596-8.
- 48 Ibid., 619.
- 49 Cf. Ioana Luca and Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, 'Life Writing Trajectories in Post-1989 Eastern Europe', *European Journal of Life Writing* 2:T1-9 (2013) T1-9, at 2-3. doi: 10.5463/ejlw2.51.
- 50 Vesna Goldsworthy, *Chernobyl Strawberries: A Memoir* (London, 2005) 294.
- 51 One such example is Vesna Maric, *Bluebird: A Memoir* (London, 2009).
- 52 See David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, 24.
- 53 Ibid., 26.
- 54 In the following sections, page numbers will be indicated in parenthesis after the citation. This mode is only used for references to Goldsworthy, *Chernobyl Strawberries*.

- 55 Göran Therborn, *European Modernity and beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945–2000* (London, 1995) 250–2.
- 56 Ioana Luca, 'Post-Communist life writing and the discourses of history: Vesna Goldsworthy's 'Chernobyl Strawberries'', *Rethinking History: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 13:1 (2009) 79–93, at 85.
- 57 Kapka Kassabova, *Street without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures* (London, 2008) and *Twelve Minutes of Love: A Tango Story* (London, 2011).
- 58 For a comprehensive discussion of Goldsworthy's response to Western Balkanism, see Vedrana Velickovic, 'Against Balkanism: Women's Academic Life-Writing and Personal and Collective History in Vesna Goldsworthy's "Chernobyl Strawberries"', *Women: A Cultural Review* 21:1 (2010) 172–89.
- 59 Luca, 'Post-Communist life writing', 85.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 90.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 84. Luca also elaborates on the differences between post-communist autobiographical revisionism and contemporary transnational Eastern European life writing, which has fostered a different ethics.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 63 Vesna Goldsworthy, 'The Balkans in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Writing', in Tim Youngs (ed.), *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling in the Blank Spaces* (London, 2006) 19–35.
- 64 Gazmend Kapllani, *A Short Border Handbook*, translated from the Greek by Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife (London, 2009 [2006]).

About the Author

Gabriele Linke is Professor of British and American cultural studies at the University of Rostock, Germany. In her book on popular literature as cultural memory (*Populärliteratur als kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 2003), she examines contemporary British and American series romances with regard to the construction and memorialization of national history. Her strong interest in the teaching of culture(s) in secondary and tertiary education resulted in the edited volume *Teaching Cultural Studies: Methods, Matters, Models* (2011). In cultural studies, she has focused on postcoloniality and transculturality in British and American film. Furthermore, she has co-edited five thematic volumes of interdisciplinary

LINKE

gender studies, the last of which, dealing with popular culture, gender and agency (*Populärkultur – Geschlecht – Handlungsräume*), came out in 2018. Previously, however, contemporary autobiography in English has evolved as her main field of research and publication, which resulted in, for example, the collection *British Autobiography in the 20th and 21st Centuries* (2017), co-edited with Sarah Herbe. E-mail: gabriele.linke@uni-rostock.de