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Resistance through Literature in Romania (1945-1989)

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

October, 2015

BY

Olimpia I. Tudor

Department of International Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

DePaul University

Chicago, Illinois

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Introduction and Project Overview

1. Introduction

The literature on communism and totalitarian oppressive regimes in Southeastern Europe is an ongoing project. After decades of cultural censorship, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked a new beginning and allowed many publishers in the Eastern Bloc¹ to legally publish writings that otherwise would have never been published in their country of origin.

Prior to the Revolution of 1989, publishing almost anything that directly challenged the communist regime was identified as dangerous by the propaganda and control apparatus in Romania. Any such literature was defined as felony, hostile attitude or action directed against communism. The authors of such writings were considered *enemies of the people*².

These writings in the form of poetry and prose (novels, memoirs, journals, essays) challenged the totalitarian systems which not only falsified history, but turned freedom of speech and expression into forms of resistance.

This project focuses on the role that literature played in undermining the Romanian communist regime (1945-1989) and examines the political engagement of intellectuals through their writing. I will analyze how literature,

¹ The Eastern Bloc refers to countries of eastern and central Europe under Soviet domination from the end of World War II (1945) until the collapse of the communist system in 1989. The Bloc included East Germany, Poland, former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria (initially member, former Yugoslavia split as early as 1948; Albania became member in 1949 and split in 1960 when openly allied with People's Republic of China)

² The term was used during the French Revolution (*l'ennemi du peuple*), but it was extensively employed in the Soviet Union (*vrag naroda*) for the purpose of singling out those who opposed the communist regime and inducing the idea that communist power derived from the people.

as a form of cultural resistance, offered a small margin of freedom that helped people survive intellectually and psychologically under totalitarian rule.

The current research is placed within the larger context of literature of resistance, while exploring the particularities of Romanian literature and the socio-political environment that generated this form of literature in Romania. Literary production, as a form of contesting the communist political system, emerged through all fissures of the enormous apparatus of control, propaganda and ultimately indoctrination, forcing the implementation of the socialist-realist doctrine. In the new socialist vision, especially after 1965, the intellectual becomes the Communist Party's servant, bearing the responsibility of mobilizing the masses "through words" to accomplishing the goals of the socialist construction³. The causal relationship between total censorship and literary work against the official instructions is the expression of some of the Romanian intellectuals' refusal to engage in such political activism. While some of them joined the Communist Party for various reasons (ranging from fame ambitions to promise of improved living standards) those who refused became opponents *by default*. Just as Andrei Codrescu notes, "in Ceausescu's Romania, the best writers were automatically dissidents, not because they made any overt political gestures but because they *did not*. In his last years, Ceausescu was no longer content with perfunctory hosannas of his court poets:

³ Pascu Vasile, *Regimul Totalitar Communist in Romania (1945-1989) Vol.II* (Bucharest: Cléo Nova, 2007), 722

he demanded praise from everybody. He understood declared opponents but was tormented by silence.”⁴

2. Project Overview

My current research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presents the literature of resistance concept. It also explores the theoretical frameworks guiding this research project indicating the non-settled debate surrounding the concept of resistance, the key terms and core elements as well as its definition. I also included a short discussion of power; while this is not exhaustively approached, the discussion on power is necessary for the later development of argument and conclusion.

Chapter two provides a historical background of the communist state of Romania since 1945 until the fall of communism in 1989. In addition, this chapter discusses the policies and institutions that made total control possible, including control over cultural life and literature and publication in particular. This part of my thesis reveals the characteristics of the Romanian communist world in which the literature of resistance developed and it also includes a discussion about the writer’s condition under totalitarianism.

The third chapter concentrates on the specifics of literature produced in Romania during different stages of Romanian communism. This part of my research focuses on two directions; the first presents the absurdity of creating

⁴ Andrei Codrescu, “The Fall of The (Romanian) Wall in Three Acts and a Prologue,” *Macalester International* 3, Article 16 (May 1996): 150

literature following officially imposed rules with examples of the end result – what I called *literature of compromise*. This part also exposes the cult of personality (especially in Ceausescu’s era) and how it was reflected in the literature written by rules enforced by communist propaganda. The second follows the forms in which the literature of resistance emerged, forewarning the reader on the diversity of the works analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter four examines the literary pieces included in my analysis, in order to show how and why they can be understood as resistant. This part illustrates the primary sources and presents them as case studies by employing qualitative research.

Chapter five concludes my thesis, reiterating its hypothesis that literature of resistance undermined the totalitarian system in which it developed and helped people survive intellectually and psychologically under totalitarianism. The findings are emphasized by explaining how literary creation against all impositions by a totalitarian system offers the opportunity to experience freedom and intellectual survival under extreme conditions.

3. A Few Terms

Although common terms used to name certain types of political or economic systems such as communism or capitalism are part of the common knowledge, there are various distinctions that need to be made in order to clarify how these terms are used within the current research.

Communism as a system of government in which the state controls the economy and a single party holds power aims to achieve a social order in which all goods are equally shared. The communist doctrine also advocates the overthrow of capitalism by the revolution of the proletariat. The revolutionary though as it is expressed in Marx's Communist Manifesto is the expression of "mutually supportive convictions turning on the premise that the course of history is [...] *inevitable* - and that the modern agents of production, the bourgeoisie, are somehow compelled to produce the proletariat, destined to be their "grave-diggers" – to inaugurate a new epoch of universal liberty and abundance."⁵

Communism in Romania was in fact a form of national Stalinism as Vladimir Tismaneanu calls it. The author makes a significant distinction between national communism (represented for example by Josip Broz Tito in former Yugoslavia, Imre Nagy in Hungary or Alexander Dubcek in former Czechoslovakia) and national Stalinism. The first was "a critical reaction to Soviet imperialism, hegemonic designs, and rigid ideological orthodoxy."⁶ National Stalinism was the opposite as it "systematically opposed any form of liberalization, let alone democratization."⁷ In addition to being reactionary and self-centered, "national Stalinism clung to a number of presumably universal

⁵ Anthony James Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism and Totalitarianism: Chapters in the Intellectual History of Radicalisms* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 29

⁶ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 32

⁷ Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 33

laws of socialist revolution and treated any “deviation” from these as a betrayal of class principles.”⁸

Socialism in its broader sense of theory or system of social organization promotes collective ownership under the control of a centralized government, but the research on the dynamics of eastern European socialism is placed within a different framework than the western European one. Western model is linked by the majority of political scientists to “values underlying western polities - “rational choice” theories, “interest group” pluralist theories, modification of the earlier “totalitarian” model, general political-process models in which one-party systems constitute merely a different set of values on a familiar set of variables.”⁹ On the other hand, the eastern European social theorists of socialism work “from modification of a Marxist analysis, adapted to the realities of eastern European socialism.”¹⁰

In her article, “Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the “Transition””, Katherine Verdery explains the model of the highly centralized form of socialism in Romania during four decades of Communist party rule. Drawing from multiple scholars preoccupied with the study of socialist systems in Eastern Europe, she identifies the “rational redistribution”¹¹ as central principle governing the appropriation of production surplus – what she calls the “allocative power”.¹² Thus socialism aims to maximize redistributive power

⁸ Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 33

⁹ Katherine Verdery, “Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the “Transition””, *American Ethnologist*, No. 3 (1991): 419, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/645587> (Accessed October 1, 2015)

¹⁰ Verdery, 419

¹¹ Ibid, 420

¹² Ibid, 421

according to an “ideology through which the bureaucratic apparatus justifies appropriating the social product and allocating it by priorities the party has set.”¹³

Verdery also applies the concept of “allocative power” to culture, indicating that socialist countries of Eastern Europe, through its public institutions, produced repositories of knowledge intended to fuel all future writing in a certain subject. “The importance of these cultural equivalents of heavy industry requires that they be produced by “reliable” institutions under the guidance of the party; cultural bureaucracies in all socialist countries have made certain to maintain control over them.”¹⁴ Additionally, the control over language, she argues, was extreme in Eastern Europe as “eastern European communists came to power with the intention of rapidly revolutionizing consciousness,”¹⁵ therefore the language and cultural production were used “to form consciousness and subjectivity and to produce ideological effects.”¹⁶

It is important to note that for the entire communist period Romania was called The Socialist Republic of Romania and the ruling single party was the Romanian Communist Party. Although the word *socialism* was commonly used, the organization of labor, the social organization and the form of government were communist in essence.

¹³ Verdery, 420

¹⁴ Ibid, 430

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

Totalitarianism is a distinctive political system in which the authority exercises absolute and centralized control over all aspects of life. It is also called *absolutism* and sometimes *dictatorship*, although theorists make more subtle distinctions between totalitarianism and dictatorship. Hannah Arendt, for example, notes that totalitarianism differs essentially from other forms of political oppression such as dictatorship.” Wherever it rose to power, it [totalitarianism] developed entirely new political institutions and destroyed all social, legal and political traditions of the country. [...] totalitarian government always transformed classes into masses, supplanted the party system, not by one-party dictatorships, but by a mass movement, shifted the center of power from the army to police, and established a foreign policy openly directed toward world domination.”¹⁷

The same distinction between dictatorship and totalitarianism is also maintained by other political scientists such as A. James Gregor who argues that totalitarianism cannot be reduced to a police state or a personal dictatorship. He states that it is a “political system that arrogated to itself the power of fashion, and emit legislation without the semblance of those “checks and balances” that typify pluralistic arrangements.”¹⁸ Moreover the separation of legislative and executive powers is anachronistic; the judicial power lacks its independence from other branches of government¹⁹, while the law becomes the

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1968), 461

¹⁸ Gregor, 16

¹⁹ Ibid

“adjunct of ideology”.²⁰ An important argument is that totalitarianism “could be politically either of the left or the right, socialist or fascist as the case might be.”²¹ Some scholars insisted that totalitarianism could only develop in right-wing political movements in capitalism while others claimed that “only a socialist or communist system can achieve full totalitarianism.”²² However by the end of the twentieth century in the context of a diminishing Soviet control over Europe, even the Soviet writers and academics were ready to recognize “the totalitarianism of their system, particularly that of the Stalinist period.”²³ The generally acknowledged conclusion of the debate was that fascism and Marxism-Leninism “share some identifiable features.”²⁴ James Gregor notes that “in Eastern Europe, as Soviet controls weakened in the 1980s, more and more socialist scholars acknowledged the features shared by fascist and Marxist-Leninist systems.”²⁵

We should also note that communism and totalitarianism are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they coexisted in Romania where the economic system was based on communist principles at the same time with a political system of totalitarian nature maintained through indoctrination and fear. Although utopian, communism believes in the common ownership of everything. Therefore, power should concentrate, at least theoretically, in the hands of a classless society. In totalitarianism, on the other hand, power

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Gregor, 16

²² Ibid, 17

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

belongs to the state and individuals have no power. “Wherever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it replaces propaganda with indoctrination and uses violence not so much to frighten people (this is done only in the initial stages when political opposition still exists) as to realize constantly its ideological doctrines and its practical lies.”²⁶

Socialist realism was the aesthetic doctrine that aimed to promote the development of socialism through didactic use of literature, art, and music. It should not be mistaken for *social realism*. Socialist realism called for the mix of nationalism in an art that “takes sides, glorifies the leader, serves the state and dramatizes its ideology.”²⁷ The main scope of the totalitarian art was to reach out to the masses and implement ideology: “the main thing in totalitarian art was its content, its form serving only to make that content accessible to the largest possible number of people.”²⁸

²⁶ Arendt, 341

²⁷ Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism: the inner history of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 127

²⁸ Gleason, 127

Chapter One

Concept of Resistance

1.1 Overview

This chapter will explore the concept of resistance as it relates to totalitarianism by presenting an in-depth analysis of the conditions that qualify a particular action as resistance. It will also include a discussion about defining resistance as the literature on the subject reveals significant disagreements concerning the limits of the concept.

The sociological meaning of resistance will be central to this discussion; however, exploring the political implications of this concept through the Foucauldian perspective of power and knowledge will result in a more synergistic approach. Resistance can never be in a position of exteriority in relation to power therefore “there were no pockets of freedom which escaped power relations, but instead resistance existed wherever power was exercised.”²⁹

This chapter will also provide a concise perspective on resistance in order to give prominence to the *literature of resistance concept* by examining specific

²⁹ Clare O’Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (London: Sage Publication, 1996), 99

writings that illustrate this in the following chapters. A discussion on resistance in communist Romania specifically will always include the concepts of totalitarianism and dictatorship. The notion of resistance in this specific theoretical framework will develop in opposition to the totalitarian construct.

The dictatorship in Romania was a form of government in which the supreme leader was the source of power, but the regime was totalitarian in its scope of controlling all aspects of an individual's life. The power of the Romanian government extended to the limit of absolute control.

1.2 Defining Resistance

Resistance as a concept proves to be more difficult to define, particularly because of the common perception which associates resistances with those visible acts that are material or physical involving the use of human body or other material objects. That is why the concept is traditionally associated with the social movements, or even broader, with the notion of "protest"³⁰. It was fairly recent (and especially after the end of the Cold War) that the studies of resistance extended their focus from physical force in dealing with totalitarianism to cultural activities, which started being recognized as important instances of resistance that undermined the political systems in which they developed.

³⁰ Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance", *Sociological Forum*, No. 4 (2004): 535, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4148828> (Accessed May 10, 2013)

The search of identifying what truly constitutes resistance, besides the physical and material acts, revealed extraordinarily diverse examples of opposition to totalitarianism such as artistic and civil activities, “talk, other symbolic behavior or even silence or breaking silence”³¹. Other studies on resistance extrapolated the analysis to a wide range of ““offstage” discursive practices” that “can be transformed into public dissent – a moment of “rupture” that has revolutionary implication”³². For example, Susan Gal as well as Barbara Falk, both drawing on James C. Scott’s book “Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts”, identify those discursive practices in “rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes and the theater of the powerless – all insinuating a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity.”³³

Although there continues to be disagreement on the exact definition of resistance, a majority of authors include or imply two core elements: *action* and *opposition (counteraction)*.

In their article, “Conceptualizing Resistance”, Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner indicate that “authors seem to agree that resistance is not a quality of an actor or a state of being, but involves some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical.”³⁴ In addition, they rightfully argue that there is a second element that all authors theorizing resistance suggest in their

³¹ Hollander & Einwohner, 536

³² Barbara Falk, “Resistance and Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe. An Emerging Historiography”, *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 25 No. 2 (2011): 318

³³ Falk, 320

³⁴ Hollander and Einwohner, 538

definitions or attempts to define resistance: the “sense of *opposition*,”³⁵ perhaps not always stated as such, but always implied by terms that indicate a certain conflict or contrast.

Although the discussion about these two core elements seems to be pointing out into the same direction, the concept of resistance continues to be difficult to define because of two other concepts related to the nature of resistance that are at the heart of incoherence and disagreement on a clear definition: *recognition and intent*.

The issue of *recognition* is a matter of *visibility*. Hollander and Einwohner argue that visibility is a “necessary prerequisite for the recognition of resistance.”³⁶ At the same time, whether or not the powerful recognizes some acts as resistant depends on how the resisters decide to act in order to make their behavior more or less visible. Also, “when opposition is not recognized by its targets, or when it is described as being unintentional, there is much less consensus that it qualifies as resistance”³⁷. Thus we can conclude that the extent of visibility largely depends on the resister’s intent as well as on the target’s perception. Although I agree that an act of opposition, which is not intentional, cannot be considered resistance, I would propose that the lack of recognition cannot disqualify an act as resistant.

This is evident to a great extent in the case of resistance literature in communist Romania. The Romanian secret police, the Securitate, one of the

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Hollander and Einwohner, 540

³⁷ Ibid, 547

largest secret police networks in the Eastern Bloc, interpreted innocent actions as *apparent* acts of resistance, while true acts of resistance were overlooked. This was a product of the agents' lack of culture and education, which resulted in ignorance and inability to understand and recognize the resistant message between lines. In this case, the target's failure to recognize resistance does not disqualify the resistant act.

The problem of recognition is also noted in Falk's study of resistance in Central and Eastern Europe. She argues that "although resistance as a broad label is significantly inclusive of everyday activities, what makes resistance *political* is its *public* nature."³⁸ At the same time she recognizes that this is particularly problematic within the communist totalitarian paradigm as the public and the private spheres are not clearly delineated, but most likely imperfect due to their lack of authenticity. Falk quotes Elzbieta Matynia, a Polish scholar, explaining that although everything that the state controlled was officially public, this public sphere was in fact "a huge realm of false facades carefully choreographed by the state."³⁹

In regards to the issue of *intent*, Scott Shaffer's approach, which reproduces the concept of "engagement" previously enunciated by David Schalk with regards to the involvement of intellectuals during the Algerian Revolution and U.S – Vietnam War, is the one that best suits the concept of resistance

³⁸ Falk, 321

³⁹ Elzbieta Matynia, *Performative Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2009), 10, quoted in Barbara Falk, "Resistance and Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe. An Emerging Historiography", *East European Politics and Societies* 25, No. 2 (2011): 321

that constitutes the subject of present research. Engagement means that the intellectuals leave the imagination realm, the “ivory tower”, to involve themselves in politics by supporting or participating in protests or social movements⁴⁰. “This participation is derived from reflection on the external political and social situation, and a conscious and reasonably free decision to become involved”⁴¹.

The writers whose work will be analyzed in the current research were in fact those intellectuals who deliberately used their talents and their work to convey a message that condemned the political system, to express a political view against the communist order, to meticulously witness and write about daily events and to elevate their own personal experience in the communist system to a collective level of consciousness. The type of engagement is not physical, but it develops instead in a moral, cultural or intellectual level, as a response to the politics of total restriction on the freedom of speech practiced by the communist authorities.

Resistance exists within a political pattern that exhibits a certain type of coercive power. Resistance comes to offset an opposite force which, in the totalitarian paradigm, coincides with the Weberian concept of power defined as the *ability or the capacity to control others*. Long after Webber, Foucault refined power as a *relation* between individuals or groups, as opposed to a *capacity* or *ability*. “Power becomes a way of changing people’s conduct, or as he defines it,

⁴⁰ Scott Schaffer, *Resisting Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 26

⁴¹ David L. Schalk, *War and the Ivory Tower: Algeria and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 41

“a mode of action upon the action of others”⁴². Although, in his view, this definition does not apply to certain relationships such as production, exchange or communication, it best reflects the type of power relations that made the total control possible.

In summation, although a unanimously definition of resistance has not yet been identified in literatures, there are aspects that allow me to employ a narrower definition when analyzing the literature of resistance as it pertains to Romanian totalitarianism. These aspects identified as essential are action, intention, opposition and power and for the purpose of this thesis resistance literature will be defined as an act of intentional writing in opposition to an oppressive system, aimed to challenge the existing structures of power.

1.3 Literature of Resistance

In one of the most influential books written on the subject, “Resistance Literature”, Barbara Harlow analyzes writings from Africa, Middle East and Latin America. She defines the *resistance literature* as a “particular category of literature that emerged significantly as part of the organized national liberation struggles and resistance movements.”⁴³

The author of this groundbreaking book purports that literature as part of a specific culture is critical within the liberation movements from oppressive

⁴² O’Farrell, 99

⁴³ Barbara Harlow, preface to *Resistance Literature*, by Barbara Harlow (New York: Methuen, 1987), xvii

colonialism⁴⁴. Although Harlow's work encompasses examples of literature from geographical areas once under colonialist rule (mostly Africa and Latin America), her arguments maintain their validity when applied to oppressive regimes that subjugated the Eastern Bloc. As different as they may be, colonialism and communism share the same paradigm of the hegemonic game that features the binary opposition of oppressor and oppressed, control and revolt, force and resistance.

By exploring the importance of the literary work within the liberation endeavors, Harlow emphasizes that it is essential to take into account the historical, social and political conditions in which such literature is produced: "Resistance narratives, embedded as they are in the historical and material conditions of their production and given furthermore the allegiances and active participation of their authors, often on the front lines, in the political events of their countries, testify to the nature of the struggle for liberation as it is enacted behind the dissembling statistics of western media coverage and official government reports."⁴⁵ It also appears that it is time for a new critical approach of the resistance literature, one that gives precedence to politics. In other words, the author calls for the abandonment of the widely popular Western tendency of assuming that literature carries no political message of significance: "Whereas the social and the personal have tended to displace the political in western literary and cultural studies, the emphasis in the literature

⁴⁴ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987)

⁴⁵ Harlow, 98

of resistance is on the political as the power to change the world. The theory of resistance literature is in its politics.”⁴⁶ This holds true for the literature of resistance in the Second World as well, and Romanian literature of resistance seems to be no exception from this theoretical point of view.

This theoretical link between literature of resistance in the so-called Third and Second Worlds is also exposed by one of the most prominent Romanian intellectuals, Andrei Plesu, in his article about the intellectual survival in times of occupation, “Intellectual Life under Dictatorship”⁴⁷. For Harlow, literature becomes an “arena of struggle” which involves: a common identity, a common cause, an “occupying power”, a given population and an occupied land.⁴⁸ Similarly, Plesu links his explanation of intellectual survival with the idea of understanding the society created post World War II in Eastern Europe under Russian occupation. In other words he also emphasizes the ideas of common identity, of an occupying power and of geographical boundaries.

The conditions that Harlow proposes for the analysis of literature of resistance seem to be, more or less, the common ground for the majority of authors preoccupied by the phenomenon. For instance, Carolyn Forché’s collection of poetry gathered within one title, “Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness”⁴⁹ is a wide selection of literary creations written in

⁴⁶ Ibid, 30

⁴⁷ Andrei, Plesu, “Intellectual Life under Dictatorship”, *Representations*. No.49, Special Issue (1995): 63

⁴⁸ Harlow, 2

⁴⁹ Carolyn Forché, *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993)

“conditions of historical and social extremity during the twentieth century through exile, state censorship, political persecution, house arrest, torture, imprisonment, military occupation, warfare, and assassination”.

Perhaps the most important in understanding the cultural resistance is the problem of reconciling “the constitutive freedom of the spirit with the aggressiveness of an inflexible ideology”⁵⁰. Andrei Plesu places the discussion of the Romanian intellectual survival in a “rigorously abnormal environment” and “within a context which re-systematized the whole culture of the world according to the criterion of class struggle, and which proposes taboos rather than models;”⁵¹ Paradoxically this exact diabolically narrowed and restrictive context nurtured the “irruptive force” of the intellectual life and “its capacity to profit from all the cracks of the system, to be enormous.”⁵² In addition, Romanian communism was defined by gaps in the politics of total control as well as changes in censorship policies as communism evolved from a stage to another with significant impact over the cultural life.

A special place in the larger context of resistance literature is occupied by the prison narrative. This is particularly interesting because the communist authorities seemed to perceive any type of communication (oral or written) as a form of protest. Therefore they strictly supervised prisoners’ interaction. Communication in general was regarded as a contestation of that control and the oppressive apparatus aimed to detect and suppress any threat to the

⁵⁰ Plesu, 61

⁵¹ Plesu, 61

⁵² Ibid, 63

existing system through force, fear, torture and murder. “As a “social, political and historical phenomenon,” detention and the literary memoirs which the prison experience generates contest the social order which supports the prison apparatus and its repressive structures.”⁵³

The literature that emerged following the imprisonment of the Romanian intellectuals (such as Nicolae Steinhardt, Lena Constante, Ioan Ioanid, Paul Goma, Ion D. Sirbu, Radu Gyr, Radu Marculescu, Richard Wurmbrand, Sanda Stolojan, to name just a few), although not always bearing an artistic merit, offered a historical perspective much different than the one imposed by the Romanian authority. For a regime that was continuously preoccupied with falsifying its history infringing upon the minimal civil rights, the recording of the prison experience was a symbol of the survival of truth that created a connection between members of the prison-society and the authors. That is perhaps why most of the writers who reported on the prison experience indicated that their journals and memoirs were almost cinematographic successions of images rather than chronological work. This was further supported by James Olney’s theory of the meaning of an autobiography: “What one seeks in reading autobiography is not a date, a name, or a place, but a characteristic way of perceiving, of organizing, and of understanding, an individual way of feeling and expressing that one can somehow relate to oneself.”⁵⁴ Writing in prison was almost an impossible enterprise as the simple

⁵³ Harlow, 123

⁵⁴ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 37

exercise of writing was in itself considered an action against the state, challenging the existing set of rules and laws designed to maintain discipline in the correctional space. As Harlow indicates “in the prison memoirs of political detainees, the “power of writing” is one which seeks to alter the relationships of power which are maintained by coercive, authoritarian systems of state control and domination.”⁵⁵

Chapter Two

Totalitarian Regime in Romania

2.1 Overview

This chapter will provide an overview of the totalitarian communist regime in Romania in order to understand what the resistance was directed against. It will examine the following: 1) construction of the total control apparatus in Romania as a non-democratic, oppressive system; 2) actions of the authorities and circumstances generated by those actions; 3) means of deploying ideology and total control; 4) challenges faced by the people trapped in those confined areas of oppression; 5) how free creation was either condemned as dangerous or limited to whatever passed censorship. The chapter will explore these facets of the communist regime within the context of socio-cultural development in Romania. This includes a short history of communism in Romania and a discussion on government resolutions regarding

⁵⁵ Harlow, 133

the control of publication of books and magazines, the political pressure exerted over the educational system at all levels, especially after the so called “July Thesis” and “Cultural Mini-Revolution” from 1971, the implication of the omnipresent Secret Police supervising and reporting on unsubmitive writers, and the emigration and exile of Romanian intellectuals, who in turn, are watched and informed on.

This chapter will also briefly explore Foucault’s concept of *governmentality* as it intrinsically relates to the way in which the totalitarian authorities understood how society should be administered (governed) on every level. The government exerted its power not only through traditional establishments, but also through the utilization of multiple institutions to control the population down to the individual level. Manipulating the human mind through seemingly nonpolitical institutions (i.e. schools), transformed every individual into a small wheel in the complicated mechanism of state control. In other words, the population in the modern communist state of Romania becomes the police.

2.2 Short History of the Communist State in Romania

The inception of the Communist Party of Romania took place in 1921, more than two decades before the establishment of the communist regime. This was Romania’s introduction to the Bolshevik politics practiced by Moscow, which translated into a strict hierarchical organization and nomenclature. As Anne Applebaum notes, following the Bolshevik model, the Communist Party was led by a general secretary and a Politburo (political bureau) that controlled a

Central Committee which in turn controlled everyone at the regional and local level⁵⁶: “Everyone at the bottom reported to the top, and everyone at the top theoretically knew what was happening at the bottom.”⁵⁷, A faction of the Romanian Socialist Party decided to affiliate its members to the Communist International (also known as Comintern) and fully accept its affiliation requirements in exchange for financial support. Contrary to its own statute built around the idea of defending the interests of the working class, The Romanian Communist Party followed the fate of almost all of the European communist parties aiming to destabilize and undermine the Occidental democracies and their influence over the Eastern part of the continent. As Pascu Vasile emphasized in his comprehensive historical account of the Romanian totalitarian communist regime, “the communist parties of the interwar period were groups of spying and diversion, violent and false propaganda directed toward all political opponents, of economic, military and political spying to the advantage of the USSR, groups manipulated by Comintern and NKVD and which manipulated, in their turn, the Occidental public opinion”⁵⁸. [author’s translation]

In 1924 the Romanian authorities banned the Communist Party and the actions of its members became illegal until 1945, when those known or qualified as illegalists started to enjoy a privileged status or position in the

⁵⁶ Anna Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 51

⁵⁷ Applebaum, 51

⁵⁸ Vasile, 13

state hierarchy. After 1945 they became part of the nomenklatura and held important decision positions in all administrative sectors of the newly installed communist government. As Vasile explains, “after August 23,1944 to be “illegalist” became yet one more reason to obtain privileges and positions in Party and State hierarchy.”⁵⁹ [author’s translation]

The establishment of communism in Romania occurred at the end of World War II, in March 1945, when the newly installed communist government received large-scale support from pro-communist mass demonstrations. In addition, the Soviet political pressure proved to be essential in solidifying the Romanian communist regime. The ascension of the Party was further bolstered by the lack of coordination and cohesion from other political parties in deploying an effective defense strategy against the aggressive attacks of the communists who sought to seize power. Most influential though was the external Soviet pressure in the so-called occupied territories and Stalin’s decision to change the political regime in Romania, despite Molotov’s (Stalin’s Secretary of State) promise that this was not going to happen.

The historical course of Romania was dramatically changed at the end of the Second World War, as the country was occupied by the Red Army. After joining the Axis powers on November 23rd, 1940, under the command of Marshal (Maresal⁶⁰) Ion Antonescu, Romania decisively participated in the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941 (Operation Barbarossa). As the Axis forces

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ The highest rank in Romanian Army

started to decline, the Allies bombed Romania in 1943. Following a failed invasion attempt in June 1944, the Soviet Union invaded the country by the end of August 1944. As the German-Romanian fronts collapsed under the Soviet offensive, on August 23rd 1944, King Michael of Romania led a coup that overthrew Antonescu's government and aligned Romania with the Allied powers for the rest of the war. After the war, despite being on the winning side, Romania found itself in a very difficult position, with its territory divided yet one more time⁶¹. With the exception of Transylvania, the other territories - Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, and Herta Region were lost to the Soviet Union, while Southern Dobrogea was lost to Bulgaria. The country came under Russian occupation, the communists gained control of the administration, the pro-Soviet government was installed and in December 1947 King Michael of Romania was forced to abdicate. Romania was declared The Romanian People's Republic and the country entered the era of dictatorship, dominated by a single party (led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej) as embedded in its Constitution - the Romanian Communist Party. After Dej's death in 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu acceded to power and the country became the Socialist Republic of Romania until the bloody Revolution of 1989.

2.3 Control, Control, Control...

⁶¹ As a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact signed in August of 1939, in the summer of 1940, the Soviet Union occupied Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and Herta region, territories that are regained and eventually lost again by Romania during the Second World War.

Among the primary concerns of the newly installed Communist Party was the subordination of culture as the proponents of the new order knew that that the intellectuals would vociferously oppose replacing the *bourgeois culture* with the *proletariat culture*. The plan was to impose not merely new ideas, but also to annihilate the people who opposed such ideas going as far as their physical extermination. The birth of *a new multilaterally developed society*⁶² asked for indoctrination, brain washing and propaganda and these could not have been done better than using the cultural phenomenon. The bourgeoisie, in its Marxist definition⁶³, now belonged to the past and so did its culture; the present belonged to the working class and this new state of affairs required the creation of a new culture *close to the people*.

The most important feature of the new culture creation process was the employment of mechanisms and institutions aimed at guiding people's behavior in the society in a way that made total control possible. Communist authorities seemed to exercise a type of "productive" power meant to create a new society. The concept of "productive power" belongs to Michel Foucault who argues that power is not only about oppressing individuals or social classes, but "it generates particular types of knowledge and cultural order."⁶⁴ That was exactly the intention of the new communist regime in Romania: to produce a certain behavior of subordination through the exercise of power. Although

⁶² Refers to the title of a book supposedly written by Nicolae Ceausescu "*Romania on the way of building up the multilaterally developed socialist society*" and published 1988, comprising different reports, speeches, interviews and articles

⁶³ The Marxist context defines the bourgeoisie as a capitalist class who owns most of the wealth and means of production in a given society

⁶⁴ O'Farrell, 100

Foucault's view of productive power, detailed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, was developed in a close relationship with the concept of creation rather than oppression, this concept can be applied to explain how the Romanian regime exercised its power over human behavior control in order to achieve a culture close to the people: "where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives."⁶⁵ This is how the Romanian communist regime understood to exercise its power in order to achieve such a goal by molding people's lives and collective consciousness. It is again Foucault who marvelously employed the concept of governmentality (initially used in connection to the idea of the State development) to define the specific way in which human behavior is manipulated: "governmentality is the rationalization and systematization of a particular way of exercising political sovereignty through the government of people's conduct."⁶⁶

A process of cultural cleansing started and the most important Romanian intellectuals were deemed as Germanophiles, supporters of Hitlerism and Fascism, therefore opponents of the new regime. Some of the first to be accused were Constantin Noica and Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Arsavir Acterian and Nae Ionescu, to name just a few of the remarkable Romanian intellectuals of those times. According to the new doctrine, the most important behavior a new intellectual had to demonstrate was political and

⁶⁵ Ibid, 101

⁶⁶ O'Farrell, 107

social engagement as they “cannot be more than intellectual workers” and not “luxurious personages or acrobats of ideas”⁶⁷. Within this new context, the writer’s mission was not free creation and expression of one’s ideas (extrapolating to free speech); instead the writer must assume the role of a social fighter within the new world order and “this mission could not be accomplished outside the ideas of liberty promoted by the great Russian democracies, which gave the intellectual worker every possibility to live in dignity and express himself as leader of people”⁶⁸.

The Society of Romanian Writers also adhered to the communist program and as a result became subject to cultural cleansing. Under new leadership, the Society adopted a new activity schedule which included the cleansing of society from Fascist elements, organization of a union in order to provide a free life to all writers, guidance by the example of Soviet Russia and of course, a State publisher.⁶⁹

2.4 The Control of Publication

After the end of World War II, the newly installed Romanian regime implemented new principles to guide the press activity and all general literary production. Although all cultural publications issued after August 23rd, 1944, advocated for the necessity of freedom of speech, the communist government enforced new laws and decrees, which clearly created an opposite reality where

⁶⁷ Vasile, 294

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Vasile, 293

free speech was completely prohibited. Between 1945 and 1947 all publications opposing the regime were deemed as Fascist or Nazi in nature, while their promoters were accused of being *enemies of the people* (*vrag naroda* in Russian) and therefore prohibited. It is almost paradoxical how the construction of the enemy of the people concept induced the idea that the people have power and they are in control, while in fact it was a political label used by the communist authorities to destroy any type of opposition.

The policies of communist authorities regarding freedom of the press and publications, such as cultural magazines, books and journals, included but were not limited to the intimidation and threatening of publishers, the prevention of press distribution, sanctions for different articles that did not follow the official guidelines, refusal to grant license for non-communist publications and restriction of paper supply.

In spite of constant protests from intellectuals, writers and journalists regarding the suppression of the free press, and the public condemnation of the so-called suggestions and recommendations that the new regime imposed, the communist authorities continued the implementation of a new liberty of writing and creation concept. Although this concept was a protected right of the people in democratic nations around the world, the communist government redefined what liberty of writing and creation meant, and the result was a distorted idea that was an absolute opposite of its natural sense. An example of this can be found in a collection of studies and essays called *The Party's spirit in Literature*, in which one of the communist activists specified that while the

communist regime does not impose literary recipes, the literature needs to include and mirror the fight against the enemy of the current orientation; the writings must be themselves a part of this fight while their authors need to openly militate against the class enemy.⁷⁰ Several years later, the policy seemed to change for the better: Nicolae Ceausescu himself, the supreme leader of the Communist Party, generously opined that the poets can express more elitist ideas if they desired, but as publishing became the State's monopoly, chances to publish such poetry were nonexistent. Pascu Vasile cites Ceausescu during one of his speeches: "Of course, I do not have anything against it if a poet wants to write for an elite, so-called elevated, he can write; but I do not understand why we should publish such poetry, why should we waste the paper with it?"⁷¹ [author's translation]

Despite of their dismissal of civil and political values of the democratic world, the oppressive regimes of Romania seemed to clearly identify the danger in allowing intellectuals to freely write and create. Redefining the liberty of writing concept proved to be of particular interest as Dennis O'Driscoll emphasized in reference to the situation of Czech writers, but perfectly applicable to Romanian writers as well. In the second issue of *Panorama of Czech Literature*, published in Prague in 1980 by the Writers' Union, the Editor-in-Chief, Oldrich Rafaj, encouraged the young Czech writers by offering recommendations: "Naturally we try to influence them and concentrate their

⁷⁰ Vasile, 297

⁷¹ Vasile, 298

attention on ethically and ideologically worthwhile and essential subjects, and in this way help the development of beginners in the field of writing to the benefit of our literature as a whole.”⁷²

In 1952, five years into Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s regime, the Romanian communist government proposed and unanimously ratified a new Constitution that consolidated communist power. The introductory chapter of this fundamental law proclaimed that “Romania is a state of working people from cities and villages”⁷³[author’s translation] who are guaranteed, through Article 85, the freedom of speech, press, assembly, meetings and street rallies. In fact, all of these freedoms were constantly suppressed to assure the eradication of the exploitation of man by man⁷⁴ and the construction of socialism through elimination of the capitalist elements⁷⁵. As Gheorghiu-Dej stated, “the freedom is possible only within the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁷⁶ Although abrogated in 1965 and replaced with the new Constitution of 1965, passed by Nicolae Ceausescu’s new government, the previous provisions were maintained and updated. The new Constitution guaranteed the same freedoms listed by the previous one through Article 28, but the next Article (29) clarifies the limits of these freedoms: “The freedom of speech, press, assembly, meetings and rallies cannot be used against the socialist order and against the interest of the

⁷² Dennis O’Driscoll, “The Writer in an East European Context,” *The Crane Bag* 7, no.1 (1983): 5

⁷³ “The Constitution of the Popular Republic of Romania 1952”, accessed November 1st, 2014, <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-populare-romane-1952.php>

⁷⁴ The Constitution of the Popular Republic of Romania 1952, article 6

⁷⁵ Ibidem, article 10

⁷⁶ Vasile, 297

working people. Any association of Fascist or antidemocratic nature is prohibited. The participation in those types of association and the Fascist and antidemocratic propaganda are punishable by law.”⁷⁷

Although not unusual in the European context, this constitutional provision was used by the repressive Romanian authorities to eliminate people’s right to assemble and prevent any acts of opposition. From the Romanian communist government’s standpoint any gathering or relatively small groups of people were dubious and therefore possible Fascist or antidemocratic in nature. In her book, “Sa nu plecam toti odata” (“Let’s not Leave All at Once”), Sanda Stolojan remembers the instinctive precautions when leaving friends’ places after a social gathering: “When leaving, we were careful not to leave all at once, to avoid arousing suspicions in case any informer was on the street, because any gathering risked to look suspect.”⁷⁸
[author’s translation]

Moreover the Law of Press of 1974 went into further details regarding the exercise of the press freedom. Thus it was completely prohibited to publish and distribute materials against the Constitution or displaying criticism of the *socialist order* and the principles which guided the Party’s internal and external policies. Among other things, it was also forbidden by law to denigrate the State and Party’s leadership, distribute and publish secret, false and alarming

⁷⁷ “The Constitution of The Socialist Republic of Romania”, accessed November 1st, 2014, <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-socialiste-romania-1965.php>

⁷⁸ Sanda Stolojan, *Sa nu plecam toti odata* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009), 54

information or any type of writing that instigated refusal to obey the laws or transmitted Fascist and nationalist ideas. This legislation established the communist state's exclusive control over the distribution of information. In fact, the second article of this preposterous law clearly states: "The press functions under the direction of the Romanian Communist Party – the leading force of the entire society of the Socialist Republic of Romania."⁷⁹ [author's translation] In addition, the international press could not gain access to information unless Romanian institutions provided authorization. It became increasingly clear that freedom of speech was not only undesirable, but forbidden and punished to the full extent of the law.

2.5 Publishers and Books

After the World War II and until 1948, the new state publishers coexisted with the previous, traditional ones. In 1945, after the Gosizdat⁸⁰ model, the Romanian government creates the State Publisher House and the Progressive Youth Publisher, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Propaganda. Later on, these agencies divided and created the State Publisher for Literature and Art, Publisher for Literature and Art and Publisher for Universal Literature, joined by the Political Publisher.

Many traditional publishers refused to join the new publishing agencies and adhere to the principles and guidance imposed by the Party. As a result,

⁷⁹ "The Press' Law of 1974", accessed December 2nd, 2014, <http://www.legex.ro/Legea-3-1974-554.aspx>

⁸⁰ The first major centralized Soviet publisher

beginning in 1947, they were forcefully closed under the accusation that they published Fascist, nationalist, idealist, pornographic and subversive literature. In 1949, the communist government established the state publishing monopoly through a decree that required that all book publications be authorized by the Ministry of Arts and Information. All private publishers and rare bookstores were either nationalized or dissolved through similar decrees. In the same year, the government created a new institution aimed to refine control at the higher level, that of ideology – The General Directorate of Press and Publications, which was under the direct subordination of the Council of Ministers.

Even before the establishment of the state publishing monopoly, the editing and publication of books were closely monitored through all available institutions, such as the Ministry of National Education or Ministry of Propaganda. The latter, together with the Council of Ministers, created a list of prohibited books and publications as early as 1945. In this context, the following actions were taken: “the immediate retirement of all periodic and irregular publications, graphic and plastic reproductions, movies, discs, medals or metallic badges, with a Fascist and Nazi character or including elements of such nature as to affect the good relations of Romania with the United Nations and Soviet Union.”⁸¹ [author’s translation] These actions were justified to be taken in conformity with article 16 of the Armistice Agreement of 1944. As

⁸¹ Vasile, 299

Vasile notes, “the “new culture” necessary meant the creation of an empty cultural field”⁸² in order to bring about a new system of values.

Moreover, authorities also published a list of prohibited authors whose writings were deemed as Fascist, anti-communist, anti-Bolshevik or anti-Soviet, and nationalist writings or referring to the lost Romanian provinces (Bessarabia, Bucovina or Transnistria) and materials about the corporatist doctrine or praising Axis’ countries (Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain).⁸³ Prohibited books were indexed under the justification that they were related to the decadent, imperialist and idealist culture of the Occident and this was maintained until 1989.⁸⁴ The government also extended the list of prohibited books and publications to those published in different languages other than Romanian. Those books as well as all books that tied to the prohibited ones through bibliographic references were also indexed and included in the special corpus of banned materials.

2.6 A Kafkaesque Network of Institutions

As absurd as the censorship, selection and prohibition of the publications were, total control of publications on every level was achieved through a network of institutions, whose activity and scope seemed to overlap in order to make sure that *dangerous and hostile* material was not released to the public.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid, 300

⁸⁴ Vasile, 301

The Ministry of Arts and Information was created in 1945 and its role was clearly defined: “to control and lead all actions of propaganda and information within the country and abroad.”⁸⁵ [author’s translation] Through its Art Committee, this institution controlled the editing and publication of all books as well as the distribution to book and antique stores, all under state control. Within this ministry and under the direct coordination of one of its directorates (Literary Directorate) was a committee whose main goal was to constantly create and update lists of prohibited books and writers. After 1947, this committee was replaced by a specialized committee called The Service of Publishers and Control.

The Ministry of Propaganda controlled all state publishers (Art and Literature Publishers, Progressive Youth and Universal Literature) including the Political Publisher especially designed to produce the propaganda literature such as Dej’s speeches or Ceausescu’s speeches after 1965. This publisher was also responsible for distributing all of the Marxist and Leninist writings to the general public. In 1945, the Ministry of National Education together with the Ministry of Propaganda released an official statement related to “the prohibition of those books opposing the new order”⁸⁶. [author’s translation] The ultimate goal of this statement was to engage almost everyone whose main activity was related to the use of books (such as teachers, students and editors) to identify and then notify the authorities about the free circulation of any type of

⁸⁵ Ibid, 295

⁸⁶ Vasile, 299

prohibited book. During the same year a special committee was created within the Ministry of Propaganda and its main prerogative was to create lists. Those lists included names of all publications from 1917 through 1944 that contained Iron-Guardist⁸⁷, Fascist, Hitlerite, chauvinist, racist or “paragraphs endangering Romania’s good relations with the United Nations.”⁸⁸ The committee functioned under the same law that immediately enforced the withdrawal from free circulation of publications, plastic and graphic copies, movies, vinyls etc. comprising elements that could have had a negative effect on the relations with the United Nations and the Soviet Union. After 2 years, in 1947, this committee was moved under the authority of Art and Information Department and it became a specialized institution called **the Service of Publishers and Control**. Just as before, the role of the new service was, again, to create more comprehensive lists. Among the most dangerous were considered the anti-communist, anti-Bolshevist, anti-Soviet and anti-Marxist publications, any piece of writing including maps and travel guides that referred to the lost Romanian provinces (Bessarabia and Bucovina), any type of pro German and pro corporatist writing as well as any publication comprising positive ideas about Italy, Japan or Spain and last, but not least, all school textbooks published prior to 1945⁸⁹. Functioning under the same law, there was another committee whose activity was the removal of those publications

⁸⁷The Iron Guard was a Romanian far-right movement and a Party (from 1927 to World War II) that promoted ultra-nationalism, anti-communism and orthodox Christian faith

⁸⁸ Vasile, 299

⁸⁹ Vasile, 300

from bookstores and second-hand bookshops, libraries, publishers or any news stall that would distribute such dangerous works.

Total control was finally achieved starting with 1949 when Decree 218 was passed to establish **the General Directorate of Press and Publications** under the direct authority of the Council of Ministers. The main scope of the Directorate was ideological control, or censorship, of every publication to ensure that they tally with “the working class ideology, Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism.”⁹⁰ At the same time, through a different order, private ownership of all local publishers was changed to state ownership; a new law was passed legalizing the State monopoly in creating the policies regarding the publication and distribution of books; and not only books, but information as well. The Romanian News Agency controlled every piece of domestic information and censored all data from foreign news agencies.

Perhaps the most important among those institutions was the **Department of State Security**, commonly known as **Securitate**⁹¹, one of the largest secret police in the Southeastern Europe relative to the population size, and most likely one of the most efficient in ensuring the exercise of power the way in which the autocratic leaders envisioned it. Collecting data regarding the population’s activities at every possible level, including or especially the personal one, the secret police consistently developed methods that allowed the

⁹⁰ Ibid, 298

⁹¹ The word written with capital “S” defines the governmental apparatus delegated to ensure the internal security of the communist state and to defend the social, economic and political system of communist regime in Romania, during the communist years

communist regime to strengthen its power. It is the *power-knowledge* mechanism best described by Foucault, when explaining his view on how power creates knowledge and it is further exerted through that knowledge: “mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge aimed at investigating and collecting information on people’s activities and existence. The knowledge gathered this way further reinforces exercises of power.”⁹²

The Securitate was in fact a repression institution that propagated the mechanisms of *state terrorism* the way Ernesto Garzon Valdes defined it when analyzing the totalitarian practices employed by the Argentine dictatorial authorities. In his book, “Bastionul Cruzimii: o Istorie a Securitatii”(The Bastion of Cruelty: a History of Securitate (1948-1964)), the Romanian historian Marius Oprea makes this analogy between the two despotic systems: “The functioning of the state terrorism, such as defined by Garzon Valdes is perfectly applicable in the political context of the Romanian communism.”⁹³ The system of terror was maintained through all imaginable methods of surveillance, from listening and video devices installed in public places and private residences, to most detailed records in the Securitate files created and maintained by an enormous number of informers.

During the first year of its existence the Securitate was the most active in implementing the repressive methods such as unjustified arrests, torture and executions without trial. Later on, as Oprea notes in his book, the methods are

⁹² O’Farrell, 101

⁹³ Marius Oprea, *Bastionul Cruzimii: O Istorie a Securitatii (1948-1964)*(Bucharest: Polirom, 2008), 10

refined by using fear as “raw material” and “the direct and brutal repression was replaced by the exertion of an absolute control over the population, through almost scientific management of fear.”⁹⁴ The brutality of arrests and investigations, a constant characteristic of the Securitate’s activity, was often denounced by the Romanian press in exile, especially that the quest for freedom as well as true, non-fabricated information, was an act that justified an arrest: “The most current accusations are those of listening to *imperialist* radio stations or reading books published in the *capitalist world*.”⁹⁵ [author’s translation]

It is evident that some of these intimidating tactics seemed to be distinguished marks of all repressive regimes. For example, arrests typically took place during the night. Just like Nicholas Rubashov, the famous main character of Arthur Koestler’s “Darkness at Noon”, many Romanians woke up in the middle of the night because “Here is authority”⁹⁶ which came to arrest them and probably asked: “Are they any better in the capitalist states?”⁹⁷

One of the most accurate descriptions of the Securitate, is found in Doina Jela’s book, “Aceasta Dragoste care ne Leaga” (“This Love that Binds Us”). The book is a historical reconstruction of Ecaterina Balaciou’s death in communist prison for refusing to persuade her daughter, Monica Lovinescu, to return to Romania from France. Viewed as a *hostile element*, constantly

⁹⁴ Oprea, 10

⁹⁵Ibid, 96

⁹⁶ Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (London: Vintage, 2005), 13

⁹⁷ Koestler, 15

supervised by Securitate due to her anti-communist position and her work at Free Europe radio station, Monica Lovinescu was never able to see her mother again after she left the country. One of the women who shared the same prison cell with her mother describes the Securitate: “*these* are worse than death. What is death? Death is kind, easy, *these are* bad. All of them are bad, you have to tell them what you have done, and what you have not done, and if you don’t know, they kill you.”⁹⁸ [author’s translation]

2.7 The Small Cultural Revolution and the July Thesis

The communist regime in Romania was from its very beginning a system based on the continuous and deliberate suppression of human rights, on the supremacy of an ideology hostile to an open society, on oligarchy, repression, intimidation, corruption and maybe the most important, on fear. Little by little, but with dramatic consequences over political, social and cultural life, the communists started implementing policies aimed at bringing about the *common good*. Among the first of these new policies were the collectivization and nationalization (the forced dispossession of the land, means of production including domestic animals and a significant number of buildings), followed by industrialization. In addition, following the Soviet Gulag model, a new system of prisons and labor camps was created to accommodate everyone who opposed the regime, especially the intellectuals and pre-war political elites who were permanently under the supervision of the Securitate. Besides the Securitate,

⁹⁸ Doina Jela, *Aceasta Dragoste care ne Leaga* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005), 28

the invasion of individuals' private life and suppression of human rights were completed by special laws⁹⁹ designed to induce demographic control prohibiting abortion and contraception.

In 1971, Ceausescu visited the People's Republic of China and North Korea and came back to employ his megalomaniac ideas in urban planning known as systematization, as well as what he called *The Small Cultural Revolution*. Deeply impressed by the cults of personality of China's leader, Mao Zedong, and North Korean dictator, Kim Il-sung, Ceausescu returned home convinced to conduct a total national transformation following the idea of China's Cultural Revolution. He delivered a famous speech known as *the July Thesis* that invited the omnipresent censorship to intensify the promotion of the Marxist-Leninist ideology at every level. This resulted in a forceful implementation of the socialist realism doubled by an attack against the intellectuals who did not strictly follow propaganda guidelines.

The full name of the *July Theses* speech explains it all – *Proposed measures for the improvement of political-ideological activity of the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members, of all working people*.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, in November of 1971, a final version of the *Theses* became an official Party document and the title changed accordingly: *Exposition regarding the Romanian Communist Party syllabus for improving ideological activity, raising the general level of knowledge and the socialist education of the masses, in order to organize*

⁹⁹ Decree 770, for example

¹⁰⁰ Vasile, 726

the relations in our society on the basis of socialist and communist ethics and equity principles.

Among the most important ideas, the July Thesis proposed the following: continuous growth in the leading role of the Party, improvement of Party education and mass political action, intensification of political-ideological education in schools and universities as well as in children and student's organizations, expansion of political propaganda through radio and television, as well as publishers, theaters, cinemas, opera, ballet, artist's unions etc.¹⁰¹, promoting a *militant, revolutionary* character in artistic productions. Appealing to the necessity of defending Romanian values, the Thesis imposed a return to *socialist realism* although presented as *socialist humanism*. The literature had to have an ideological basis and that eventually led to a conflict with the Writers' Union culminating with the Party retrieving the privilege of granting literary awards and imposing its own standard of values. Even the writers who sympathized with the regime denounced the measures and the proposals were openly condemned on Radio Free Europe. The conflict brought about more actions from the Party's in order to ensure the strict implementation of the Theses proposals. From this point on, the broadcasting and publication abroad of any material that might prejudice the interest of the state was strictly prohibited. Establishing any type of contact with a foreign radio or newspaper was considered a hostile act directed against Romania and therefore a penal

¹⁰¹ Ibid

offense. Under these circumstances not only the writers or intellectuals were imprisoned in their own country, but every single Romanian citizen.

2.8 Being a Writer in Communist Romania

Within this total control paradigm, it becomes clear that being a writer in communist Romania did not mean negotiating freedom of speech, but more or less a condition in which the intellectual dealt with his/her own ability of conveying the ideas without altering their essence even though he/she had to alter the form.

Writers, including award-winners, needed authorization to write and their literary product had to pass the propaganda filter. One of the most appreciated Romanian poets at the time, Tudor Arghezi, famously described the situation: “the literary life is free, with the condition of not to write.”¹⁰² However, those who chose to continue writing and exercised their freedom of thought and speech, had to find an alternative way, while avoiding the restrictive laws that were designed to punish those freedoms specifically.

Permanent political control of almost everything that was published during Romanian authoritarian rule generated a significant transformation in the form and function of literature as well as of other forms of art. Creative writing defined as literature became a political instrument; what seemed to be pure imagination was often a disguised political thought that would have never been allowed to be spoken loudly without serious consequences in Romania

¹⁰² Vasile, 296

during the communist years. For instance, Ana Blandiana's essay "The Phantom Church" or "The Floating Church" (in a different translation) escaped censorship as a fantastic tale, while the story was "a transparent allegory about the survival of religion among Romanians oppressed by an atheist government"¹⁰³. Another example, one of Octavian Paler's symbolic novel, "Un Om Norocos"¹⁰⁴ ("A Lucky Man") was publicly condemned and public trials were organized to denigrate and judge the author's deviation from the communist norms; in fact the novel, similarly to the fiction work of Franz Kafka and Dino Buzzati, is a metaphor of an imprisoned existence, a hopeless captive world in which every character seems unable to wake up from a never ending nightmare. In fact, the title is an ironical metaphor just like Milan Kundera's "Joke", and the author, like so many during those years, certainly counted on the collective audience to perceive and decode the connotation of the title.

It then becomes vital to examine the form and literary style of the literature, which transformed as a result of permanent censorship that sought to neutralize any type of dangerous work. This transformation strikes the very essence of creative writing; just as Dennis O'Driscoll emphasized in his article related to the Czech writers Vaclav Havel and Miroslav Holub and Polish writer Zbigniew Herbert, extrapolating to the condition of the writer in the East European context: "Although, in truth, the position of the poet in both East and West seems hugely unsatisfactory, the constraints on the poet in the East

¹⁰³ Codrescu, 145

¹⁰⁴ Octavian Paler, *Un Om Norocos* (Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca, 1984)

seem to strike more brutally at the heart of his essential creative freedom; and the files of Amnesty International and the pages of *Index of Censorship* show just how difficult it is for any principled East European writers to live an unmolested existence (even if he is himself a convinced socialist).¹⁰⁵

The usage of surrealism, irony, paradox, metaphor, and symbols is not necessarily the essence of style, but it is indispensable in getting the message out by disguising the real intent. It seems like mastering irony was a necessary condition to pass the censorship's sieve. "In the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, a poet will have to be master of irony and parable if he is to maintain his integrity and still hope to publish in officially-recognized journals."¹⁰⁶ The end result presented interpretive difficulties and ambiguity, which could escape vigilance of the censorship.

In a similar manner, important *threatening writings* were published due to the pure ignorance of those responsible for ideology. It becomes clear that writers utilized different techniques of camouflaging their writings and the readers rapidly assimilated them. The interdiction against ideas and methods characteristic of the spirit of the age (such as structuralism or psychoanalysis) qualified as formalistic, reactionary and bourgeois by the Marxist criticism, increased the intellectual interest in producing more or less conspiratorial work that carried the prestige of political risk.¹⁰⁷ Resistance through literature becomes the means of survival in an oppressive ideological system.

¹⁰⁵ O'Driscoll, 4

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Plesu, 62

Abnormality of the environment ignites the potential of intellectual life and enables it to powerfully emerge through all of the cracks in the system. As Andrei Plesu puts it, the “intellectual life under dictatorship is possible, paradoxically, because it is potentially impossible”.¹⁰⁸

Within this context, the sense and scope of education in communist Romania became the implementation of an ideology promoted by a political system that employed an absurd censorship, supported by a huge propagandistic network of institutions. The censorship apparatus suppressed anything alternative from emerging, once the slightest threat (real or imagined) against the regime was detected. However, a disguised and sometimes underground form of cultural literary production developed as means of resistance against the oppressive structures that systematically suppressed the cultural elite. Some of these writings, especially in the form of journals, were confiscated by the Securitate, returned and confiscated again, as the simple process of recording the atrocities the people witnessed every day was perceived as a threat; other literary work was altered by the propaganda service before publication or simply prevented from publication, in some cases placing the unsubmissive authors under house arrest or forced domicile (such as the famous cases of Constantin Noica or Mircea Dinescu) or under the death penalty (such as Radu Gyr for his overtly anti-collectivization poem *Arise Gheorghe, Arise Ioan!*). All this literature obviously challenged the system and its cultural prohibitive policies that intended to strictly subordinate critical

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 63

thought and the freedom of speech to communist ideology. It pointed out the failure of the communist economic system, the denial of human rights and the forceful transformation of the traditional society. At the same time, the message brought attention to a different discourse that opposed the official one. As a consequence, this was perceived as a threat against communism that seemed to legislate toward the annihilation of the public consciousness, but at the same time it offered to its authors the opportunity of experiencing freedom under extreme conditions, within a system that did not guarantee the freedom of expression, but on the contrary, it punished it.

Chapter Three

Literature of Compromise and Literature of Resistance

3.1 Romanian Literature during the Stages of Romanian Communism

The totalitarian dictatorships installed in Romania after 1948, initially led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1948-1965) and then Nicolae Ceausescu

(1965-1989) wanted to subordinate the intellectual class in order to protect the power of the government and ensure the sustainment of the political regime.

The methods of repression were not limited to the prohibition of dangerous writing and publications, but were also based on exploitation of human desires and aspirations. As Eugen Negrici notes, the communist apparatus “continued to accomplish its mission in a different way as well, controlling not only the editorial production, but also the writers’ consciousnesses easily seduced and manipulated.”¹⁰⁹ [author’s translation] The regime knew how to exploit mediocrity and opportunism in order to promote a distorted system of cultural values. Ideology played an important role in the process of altering the value system in such a way that the pact with the communists seemed almost natural. The “substitute for naked terror” as Vladimir Tismaneanu describes ideology, was “the pabulum offered by the system to its subjects in order to placate their doubts and convince them that theirs is the only rational behavior.”¹¹⁰

In addition, the communist apparatus also used threatening and intimidation tactics in order to compromise influential writers. One example was to spread fear about a possible incrimination in pending political trials, based on accusations of fascist orientation.

¹⁰⁹ Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romana sub Comunism: Proza* (Bucharest: Editura Fundatiei Pro, 2006), 11

¹¹⁰ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 137

Although the literature written during the period in discussion is placed entirely under the totalitarian communist paradigm, a distinction must be made among the three stages of Romanian communism:

A. Stalinization (1948-1964)

This period was divided into two stages - *complete Stalinism* and *formal de-Stalinization*, both marked by a continuous process of implementing Stalinist policies and practices, the so-called dogmatic Stalinism. A distinction must be made between Stalinism and Stalinization: Stalinism refers to the ideology and totalitarian policies adopted by Stalin while Stalinization refers to the process of implementing the Stalinist ideology and policies.

The first stage, from 1948 to 1953, was characterized by fundamentalism and forceful nationalization of the publishing business. The political factor was maintained as essential and the new government through its Ministry of Propaganda and Political Publisher ensured the availability of all Marxist and Leninist writings. Everything that did not serve the Party and the communist agenda was unacceptable. As Eugen Negrici notes, “within the first years of communist regime imposed in Romania with Red Army’s tanks, the only officially accepted literature and vigorously distributed through all imaginable ways was that of “propaganda and agitation”. Its one and only repertoire was decided and dictated by Moscow.”¹¹¹ [author’s translation]

¹¹¹ Negrici, 19

There were only a few permitted recurring themes, all related to the cult of dictators, the Party, the civilizing hero – Soviet soldier, the creation of a new man – the communist society citizen, the common good and the well being of those members of multilaterally developed communist society¹¹². Negrici notes that in order to understand the propagandistic literature, it is necessary to look at its goal. Romanian regime aimed to “transform the ideological themes in actual feelings, radically change the mentality and create the “new man”.”¹¹³ In this context, the communist regime’s recommendations imposed a writing pattern based on the following criteria identified in Negrici’s account of Romanian literature under communism:

a) placing these recurring themes belonging to the paradigm of universal good in antithesis with the evil, generally represented by the imperialists, fascists, capitalists, businessmen, the bourgeoisie, spies;¹¹⁴

b) unlimited usage of these themes and their repetition to promote the communist ideology: “ like during a religious service in which the glorifying formulas are repeated incessantly;”¹¹⁵

c) promotion of hatred for the wealthy and class hatred;¹¹⁶

d) simplicity of the language and structure, narrative based on the opposition between good and evil;¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid, 21

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Negrici, 21

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 22

¹¹⁷ Ibid

- e) popular representation of reality addressed to the masses¹¹⁸ (socialist realism);
- f) necessity to portray hope for a bright future and the myth of never ending progress; (the myths of “Messianic Revolution”, “New Gold Age” and the myth of “ongoing progress of humanity towards a bright future”)¹¹⁹

In the case of poetry, the censorship apparatus even more closely supervised the implementation of the regime’s recommendations through all responsible public institutions in the Ministry of Propaganda, Service of Publisher and Control, General Directorate of Press and Publication, Department of State Security etc. as detailed in the second chapter. Communist authorities assumed that a short text of rhyming words was easier to memorize, multiply or spread; therefore poetry could potentially be an uncontrolled message against the ruling Party. In contrast with prose, where authors gained extremely limited channels of publication during the second part of Stalinization stage, poetry was kept under strict control. The poetry writing standards were maintained at such a level that similarities among many different authors’ poems were disgracefully high. The poems were to follow the imposed themes, often use the same groups and combinations of words up to the stereotype level. The authors seemed to be “merely the signers

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 27

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 28

of thousands of variants of a one and only poem directly or indirectly provocative.”¹²⁰ [author’s translation]

This period was also characterized by a growing pressure from Soviet Union “not just to bring in the Soviet art, [...], but to transform Eastern European culture in to something fundamentally different.”¹²¹ In the beginning of 1949, fearing the unreliability of the Eastern European allies, the Soviet Foreign Ministry elaborated a “list of suggestions”¹²² to bolster the Soviet influence on the cultural life of Eastern Europe. Starting from the premise that Polish and Czechoslovak intelligentsia was still under a strong bourgeois and imperialist influence, the Soviets extrapolated the argument to all satellite countries under their hegemonic power: “They made a similar analysis of Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, and concluded once again, that more ideological education was needed: the translation and distribution of Soviet films and books, the construction of Soviet cultural centers and Soviet-style schools, and more cultural exchanges.”¹²³

The second stage of Stalinization, from 1953 to 1964, was a period of relative haziness marked by the illusion of a return to normalcy. This period is probably best described as “the stage of tactical concessions, the mime of a thaw out and de-Stalinization, a suggestion of normalcy as diversion”¹²⁴ [author’s translation]. In 1953, after Stalin’s death, Gheorghiu-Dej found it

¹²⁰ Negrici, 35

¹²¹ Applebaum, 337

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Negrici, 29

difficult to connect to Nikita Khrushchev¹²⁵ policies of de-Stalinization. He decided to go against the Soviet directions and started an intense process of industrialization in addition to the ongoing collectivization, while his rule remained Stalinist in essence.

During this period, writing recommendations did not change and the writers were continuously instructed to reflect the transformations of agriculture and industry. The main character of any type of writing was expected to be the new man – the communist, in fact the peasant whose private property was taken away through collectivization. This new man entered an artificial city life, burdened with long daily commutes from the country side to the city or dealing with the chronic lack of housing or with the impossibility to obtain housing in the city, to mention just a few changes driven by the forced transformation of Romanian society.

Writing patterns did not change, but after Stalin's death, the censors allowed the publication of a few books that did not belong to the literary landscape imposed by the regime. That was partly possible by allowing the authors the liberty of writing about the past, although the recommendations were to present the facts in terms of class struggle and peoples' liberation from the exploitative bourgeoisie. Within this context, the censors allowed for instance the release of "Bietul Ioanide" by George Calinescu, "Toate Panzele Sus!" by Radu Tudoran or "Morometii" by Marin Preda. The publication of such

¹²⁵ Russian politician, First Secretary of the Soviet Union Communist Party, between 1953 and 1964, who initiated a few relatively liberal reforms after Stalin's death

books was “quite incredible in that gloomy world”¹²⁶ [author’s translation] and received with hostility by the communist critique; although not necessarily qualified as literature of resistance, those books “imposed the first rules of the game with the regime’s rigors”¹²⁷ and represented a new way in confronting the authorities’ vigilance.¹²⁸

At the same time, due to the more dangerous nature of poetry, poets remained trapped in the rigorous field of the Party’s guidance and approval. It was only after 1960, that poetry regained artistic strength and diversity.

B. Limited Liberalization (1964-1971)

In 1964, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s regime persuaded Moscow that the presence of Soviet troops was no longer necessary due to the extraordinary stability of the communist regime in Romania. A stratagem to deceive the Soviet government, this move marked the beginning of a limited independence from Moscow and a revival of Romanian patriotism and national interest, which had been in the shadows of Soviet primacy since the end of World War II.

The liberalization wave encompassed the literary field and, although the specialized propaganda institutions were not as active, they remained in place, but became more permissive while refining their control tactics. As Negrici notes, “propaganda apparatus does not give up propaganda, but it wants it

¹²⁶ Negrici, 32

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ Ibid

implicit or much less strident and, possibly counterbalanced by an acceptable literature.”¹²⁹

Moreover, after Dej’s death in 1965, when young Nicolae Ceausescu acceded to power, poetry became an unchained phenomenon, a field of extraordinary vitality and creativity. Not yet corrupted by the Korean mirage¹³⁰ and willing to create a contrast with Dej’s rule, Ceausescu’s regime allowed cultural liberalization despite the fact that censorship and propaganda continued to subsist behind the scenes, overshadowed by the limited cultural liberalization.

The links to the Western cultural world were reestablished and permanent supervision ensuring the subordination of literature under communist ideology seemed to be left behind. As the educational curriculum continued to be refined and updated, authorities still required some ideological conformity, such as in the case of historical subjects. Although selective, translations of important contemporary foreign authors as well as the works of notable philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Camus and Sartre, were available without any restrictions. Romanian elite felt that cultural life was freed from politics especially since a new generation of talented writers was allowed to emerge based on the aesthetic principles as opposed to ideological compliance.

This new political climate encouraged writers to go back to previously prohibited themes. One of those themes was the revival of *the homeland* within the context of a regained national dignity and relative independence from the

¹²⁹ Negrici, 47

¹³⁰ Ceausescu visited North Korea and China only in 1971

Kremlin. Writers felt the momentum and the cultural effervescence was truly driven by the pride of surviving the Soviet oppressor and the rediscovery of Romanian national values. The impulse was real, but the propaganda apparatus cleverly capitalized on the writers' ardor with the scope of legitimizing the theme of the socialist (communist) homeland.

In addition, during the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Ceausescu refused to join the operation using the argument of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.¹³¹ This moment, more than any other in the past, was used by the propaganda apparatus to imply and spread the conviction that somehow the homeland was endangered and there was a need for a powerful leader to rescue the country. This marked a turning point for Ceausescu; after 1971, he utilized mass media, propaganda, and all available methods to create an idealized image of himself as a leader, what is referred to as a cult of personality.

C. Communist Nationalism or Re-Stalinization (1971 – 1989)

Beginning in 1971 and after Ceausescu's visit to North Korea and China, which culminated with the *July Thesis*¹³² as detailed in the second chapter, the

¹³¹ In 1968, the members of Warsaw Pact (Albania, Bulgaria, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Soviet Union) led by Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia (member of the Pact as well) in order to stop the reforms started by Alexander Dubcek. Ceausescu refused to send troops even though Romania was a member of the Pact. The Czechoslovakian reforms were commonly known as The Prague Spring.

¹³² *July Thesis* was the name given to Ceausescu's speech promoting the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the forceful implementation of the socialist realism

communist regime unleashed an ideological offensive in order to consolidate the single Party and the dictatorial power of the party's first Secretary.

The censorship apparatus was reanimated and grew stronger. The majority of Romanian intellectuals, especially those who had supported Ceausescu, were taken by surprise. The internal chaos of social and cultural life caused by the new mini-cultural revolution (July Thesis) was also doubled by an intensified propaganda to legitimize the supreme leader. Additionally, the Soviets' disapproval of Romania's derailment from socialist realism legitimized the focus on Ceausescu's ability to defend the country from external interference. The propaganda's role was to increase and maintain "the prestige of the leader, who [...] was supposed to find other supporters or to activate, through new or old and safe means, the interest of old supporters of the regime."¹³³ [author's translation]

Libraries and publication distributors went through a renewed process of ideological cleansing; the principles of class hatred were reestablished through preaching against the educated or the wealthy; the denouncement of any action against the party virtually transformed every member of the society into a possible informer ready to be recruited by the Securitate.

Similar to the early rise of communism in Romania, writing literature after 1971 became an activity confined within ideological limits and centered on Ceausescu's cult of personality. Little by little, literature of propaganda written on imposed subjects such as the Party, the new man, communist hero, and the

¹³³ Negrici, 60

achievements of the communist system started to fade and it was replaced with a single theme dedicated entirely to representing Nicolae Ceausescu as the Supreme Leader, a national hero, and the Savior capable of protecting Romania from any type of threat. He was depicted as a beloved leader, brilliant statesman, tireless worker, extremely courageous and knowledgeable, promoter of democracy and liberty, the Giant of the Carpathians, fountain of light, to name just a few out of hundreds of metaphors presented by Virgil Ierunca in his periodic columns signed in the exile's press and later gathered in a book – "Antologia Rusinii"¹³⁴ ("The Anthology of Shame"). Although intelligent, Ceausescu was uneducated, and far from being the legendary character and the hero amongst heroes as the reverential literature described him.

In addition, his wife, Elena Ceausescu shortly "developed a taste for fame"¹³⁵ particularly after meeting Isabel Peron¹³⁶ in Buenos Aires, in 1973. Her ambitions were not limited the national recognition. She wanted international fame; therefore she had the Directorate of Foreign Intelligence (DIE) obtain her innumerable titles and distinctions. As Pacepa remembers, "two walls were covered with Elena's many Romanian and foreign scientific diplomas, together with numerous certificates belonging to medals for scientific, technical, or educational merit. Most of them were familiar to me, since in the last ten years the DIE had been deeply involved in obtaining them

¹³⁴ Virgil Ierunca, *Antologia Rusinii dupa Virgil Ierunca*, ed. Nicolae Merisanu and Dan Talos (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009)

¹³⁵ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons* (Washington D.C. : Regnery Gateway, 1987), 49

¹³⁶ Isabel Martinez de Peron, wife of Argentinean president Juan Peron in 1973, herself president of Argentina from 1973 to 1976 following her husband death;

abroad for her. Elena greedily collects every scientific diploma she can, from honorary degrees to memberships in foreign scientific societies.”¹³⁷

She obtained her PhD in Chemistry in 1967 with a thesis written by another professor and she accumulated an incredible number of positions including full member of the Romanian Academy and vice president of the National Council for Science and Technology, which was especially created for her. The expected appellation in her case was *Comrade Academician Doctor Engineer, Elena Ceausescu*, most of the time followed by *worldly renowned savant*. Besides being portrayed as famous for her scientific achievements, she was also described as a devoted mother, generous person, beautiful woman, role model and vibrant politician.

Similarly to the 1950's, writers were expected to create within certain canons and the result was aesthetically horrible. Listed below are a few main ideas that dominated the literature devoted to the cult of personality:

- a) Romanian history had to be necessarily glorious; Romanians were a superior nation capable of historical intuitions through exceptional leaders. Although grossly exaggerated these representations were “an enormous manipulation with the scope of legitimizing Ceausescu, the last in the magnificent series of great leaders.”¹³⁸ Just a few examples of those exaggerations prove how unreasonable those exaggerations were: Romanians “anticipated

¹³⁷ Pacepa, 50

¹³⁸ Negrici, 63

the French Revolution, through “the revolution” of Horea, Closca and Crisan” and they “invented the national state through Michael the Brave.”¹³⁹ [author’s translation]

- b) The greatness of Romanian destiny under continuous assault by strangers and the creation of *dangerous other, who is not one of us* (including the exiles);
- c) Idealization of homeland and the obligation imposed upon mass media to promote the patriotic poetry and glorify the leader;
- d) Development of predictable mechanisms in literary creation due to the obsessive repetition of some words. Eugen Negrici identifies series of *privileged nouns* such as *land, glory, mountains, wings, steel, bread, skies, harvest, flag, lark, Carpathians, Danube, sun, pinnacle, peak, epopee*. The recipe was completed by some nouns with “catalytic virtue”¹⁴⁰ necessary to make the text shine: *heart, dream, fruit, horizon, perfume, crown, today, yesterday, and tomorrow*. “In such a *mélange*, it was enough to pour some adjectives (*great, vast, burning, masculine, clear, sovereign, clear, [...] sacred, triumphant, legendary*) and the core became obsessive, tyrannical, like driven by the boundless magic of inertness’ forces.”¹⁴¹ [author’s translation]

¹³⁹ Negrici, 63 (The uprising led by Horea, Closca and Crisan was a serfs’ movement cause by double taxation developed in Transylvania in 1784; Michael the Brave was able to unite the three historical Romanian provinces Transylvania, Moldova and Wallachia, for a very short period of time, between 1599 and 1600)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 71

¹⁴¹ Ibid

3.2 Literature of Compromise

This absurd literary landscape enforced by an omnipresent censorship was the most suitable for the development of a linguistic pattern, commonly known as *wooden language*. This was characterized by a multitude of clichés, shortage of essential ideas and obsessive repetition of imposed themes. “Indeed, in the entire communist propaganda, Romanian language is perverted, mutilated, became stiff, therefore Romanian writer loses the essential fount.”¹⁴² [author’s translation]

Free creation was replaced by language uniformity dominated by stereotypes and sterile words. The main scope of this process, vigilantly supervised by the Party’s propaganda, was to achieve homogeneity of human consciousness. “Individuals, under surveillance by police and party, are enrolled in age cohorts, political, paramilitary, and functional associations, and expected selflessly to serve the system.”¹⁴³ Within the amorphous mass of the new communist men and women, control was extrapolated to the level of words. Virgil Ierunca’s project, “*Antologia Rusinii*” (“Anthology of Shame”), was meant “to expose, through the repetition of pieces from press of propaganda, the uniformity of consciousness, of language and the unprecedented extent of

¹⁴² Nicolae Merisanu and Dan Talos, foreword to *Antologia Rusinii*, by Virgil Ierunca (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2009), 13

¹⁴³ Gregor, 16

servilism, spread all over the creative fields: literature, Fine Arts, theater, film, science.”¹⁴⁴ [author’s translation]

The mix of perverted language and seduced consciousness was fully revealed in Ierunca’s “Anthology of Shame”. The corrupted communist climate brought together distinguished and talentless authors although their literary work stay under the same muse. Merisanu and Talos, the editors of the anthology, made a classification¹⁴⁵ of those writers as follows: a) authentic talented intellectuals who placed the material or professional success or the desire to publish beyond any conscientious scruples; b) cultural activists promoted by the authorities as role models in antithesis with young writes who aspired to give free reign to their imagination. The activists were usually placed in executive roles in publishing or press business and they simultaneously exercised censorship; c) anonymous and ambitious people who saw in Ceausescu’s cult of personality, the opportunity of asserting their literary virtue, otherwise non-existent; d) Romanians from the collaborationist exile whose roles were to praise Romanian communism in the exile press; this was also a tactic of manipulating exiles to relinquish their critical view over the communist regime in Romania.

In addition, after 1971, the cult of personality and the implementation of socialist realism left little room for non-fictional books. A significant part of the publishing output was represented by political speeches, cosmeticized

¹⁴⁴ Merisanu and Talos, 8

¹⁴⁵ Merisanu and Talos, 9-11

biographies of the leader, grossly politicized stories and children's literature.

Below are a few examples to illustrate the literature of compromise as a multitude of rattling words praising the Party and the leader, the mirror of a distorted world in which the language and consciousness became even, "a crime against the Romanian culture and spirituality."¹⁴⁶ [author's translation]

- Ovidiu Crohmalniceanu (literary critic and fiction writer, paying Homage to comrade Nicolae Ceausescu in 1973): "Comrade Ceausescu has a profound democratic style of conducting the public affairs. He ceaselessly uses the principle of popular consultation, encourages the critic, has trust in people and knows how to be as intransigent as he is sympathetic. [...] Everyone feels that such meetings are not based on anything formal, but on a burning desire to make things work better. Lastly, Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu combines a sharp intelligence with an extraordinary practical knowledge and a big spiritual ardor. [...] The writers felt that Comrade Ceausescu is an enlightened guide and a friend who always found the time to listen to their opinions."¹⁴⁷ [author's translation]
- Ludmila Ghitescu (poet, about Nicolae Ceausescu in 1978):
"Hungry for sun, for lots of light
We rush to work with virginal smile
We build a country of steel and granite, united:

¹⁴⁶ Merisanu and Talos, 15

¹⁴⁷ Ierunca, 152

The Leader is the architect of future world.”¹⁴⁸ [author’s translation]

- Letitia Vladislav, about Elena Ceausescu in 1979:

“Present in joy. Present in sorrow. There was no joyous moment when this woman’s steps would not resonate with the steps of this nation. And there were no moments of sore trial when the soul of this devoted daughter of the homeland did not suffer with those being at the lock. [...] The man believes in men and does everything for the people’s good. The savant lays time on the line, precious days and nights, for peoples’ good. And beyond all, there’s the woman, Elena Ceausescu, the country’s daughter, in a sincere and all-time plea, for the beauty of life, for our babies’ tranquility, for restfulness of our creed, and for peace on Earth.”¹⁴⁹ [author’s translation]

- Mihai Beniuc (socialist realist poet and novelist, placing Nicolae Ceausescu among the most famous Romanian leaders throughout history, in 1986):

“She (*the country* - *author’s note*) has always victoriously succeeded
The cruel flames of times
And has had a leader to preside
Such as Stefan, Vlad, Mihai or Nicolae.”¹⁵⁰ [athor’s translation]

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 196-197

¹⁴⁹ Ierunca, 557

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 88 (refers to important figures in Romanian history: Stephan the Great, Vlad the Impaler, Michael the Brave and last in the series Nicolae Ceausescu)

3.3 Literature of Resistance

The above examples demonstrate that propaganda thrived in the literary landscape nurtured by communist authorities. The endless production of an official type of literature and the excessive use of hyperbolic terms led to a literary realm flooded by disgraceful texts as exemplified above. In this ghoulish climate, there were voices and texts which went against the stream. As Eugen Negrici notes, “the uninterrupted presence in the literary life of an official literature of propagandistic use and served by an important number of quill drivers transformed into a constant burden, with unexpected results. It became an aggressive virus against which the true literature was forced to always produce antibodies, deliver answers and defend its own, groping for free corridors.”¹⁵¹ [author’s translation]

Writers who struggled to maintain their spiritual freedom and ethical code were in constant search of those avenues. In addition to books published abroad, in exile, there were also gaps in the repressive communist system itself. These corridors of publication were provided by the propaganda apparatus sometimes driven by pure incompetence or lack of culture, sometimes by the necessity to enforce their policies, justify its existence and reassert its position as a repressive pawn of the communist system.

The literature of resistance against the communist regime in Romania encompassed both fictional and non-fictional genres and the texts are various in the form of poetry and prose.

¹⁵¹ Negrici, 15

Poetry

Poetry written in communist Romania includes a wide range of styles and they are mostly lyrical. They sometimes contained an overt message against the regime, or a covert one in which case the poems acquired some epic connotations, although they remained lyrical. An interesting category was the poetry classified as children's literature, which allowed it to pass the censors, while in fact it was satirical poetry written for political purposes or carrying a political message against the communist rule and cult of personality. The case of *Arpagic*, a character created by poet Ana Blandiana is an example detailed in the following chapter.

Prose

Most of the literary work of resistance in the form of prose analyzed in the current research is non-fictional, but it includes fictional literature such as symbolic novels or short stories.

Non fictional works are in the form of *journals, memoirs and biographies*. Besides their historical character and rarely in the form of a story, these works are the clearest exercise of Romanian consciousness in times of resistance. They present events, people or scattered pieces of information related to communism atrocities and therefore were perceived as the most dangerous form of literature. By exposing facts that contradicted those imposed by propaganda apparatus, these works challenged the hegemonic force that dictated and controlled the formation and maintenance of the communist social structures.

The dangerous character of journals, autobiographies and prison narrative draws from their unique particularity of generating a type of discourse that antagonizes with official one. In his “Autobiographical Pact”, Philippe Lejeune explains this particular position of the autobiographical writer, which can be extrapolated to all self-narratives: “An author is not a person. He is a person who writes and publishes. Straddling the world-beyond-the-text and the text, he is the connection between the two. The author is defined as simultaneously a socially responsible real person and the producer of a discourse.”¹⁵² It is exactly the type of discourse that communist authorities feared the most and attempted to suppress by all means.

Prison narratives make a special case through their diversity. Although often categorized as non-fictional, there are instances in which the author becomes creative in order to better describe a person, a fact, a specific event or a scene and therefore the literature becomes more aesthetically elaborated. Ruxandra Cesereanu in her book, “Gulagul in Constiinta Romaneasca” (“The Gulag in the Romanian Consciousness”) identifies three ways in which the Romanian Gulag is presented: “1. non-fictional writings (monographs of detention, memories and prison “diaries” as well as novels-document), 2. realist writing base on the verisimilitude principle (novels based on the concentration experience) and 3. allegorical parable writing (anti-utopia).”¹⁵³

¹⁵² Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin & Julie Rak (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 11

¹⁵³ Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Gulagul in Constiinta Romaneasca* (Iasi: Polirom, 2005): 10

The special character of prison narratives could also be justified by the place they occupy between history and literature, although “they rather belong to literature and not historiography, for many reasons.”¹⁵⁴ Some of these reasons, identified by Ruxandra Cesereanu, are related to the specifics of memory which by nature distorts information, the time when they were written, the personal rather than impersonal nature of narratives, and the subjective nature of the author’s memories.¹⁵⁵

Sometimes, the unrealistic feeling transmitted by this type of literature paradoxically resides in the author’s attention for details and the scrupulousness of the description. Harold Segel emphasizes this idea in his book “The Walls Behind the Curtain East European Prison Literature, 1945-1990”: “The richly detailed novels of incarceration by the Romanian authors Paul Goma and Marcel Petrisor paint a picture of such overwhelming brutality and degradation that their prison world assumes a surreal character of its own. Obviously drawing heavily on personal experience, the novels often become unbearable for the inhumanity portrayed in them.”¹⁵⁶

Fictional work (in the form of *symbolic novels* or *short stories*) is also included with examples of writings that deviated from official communist norms. Metaphors are sometimes transparent and the author relies on the readership to decode the message. Some of those passed censorship due to the

¹⁵⁴ Cesereanu, 11

¹⁵⁵ Cesereanu, 10-11

¹⁵⁶ Harold B. Segel, *The Walls Behind the Curtain East European Prison Literature, 1945-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012): 4-5

pure ignorance of those in charge of verifying the conformity, or in case of allegories, due to incapacity of authorities to initially detect the message. Such writings became a problem for the authorities only after their publication and spread of public rumor regarding the encoded message. These cases are also indicative of the level of control established by the communist authorities, as they were able to detect these imperceptible movements and readership's opinion by the omnipresent secret police agents infiltrated throughout the entire social fabric.

Although the nature of censorship changed during different phases of communism in Romania, the publication was always under state control. The diversity of literary genres and styles featured by literature of resistance in communist Romania showed how words were used to wage war against totalitarianism. Resistance was carried out through different ways of literary expression as it will be analyzed in the following chapter. Through these works the use of language in literature was one of the fewest liberties to be exercised in an environment of total control.

Chapter Four

Resisting through Literature in Communist Romania

This chapter will analyze a few works written in Romania or in exile during communism, emphasizing their resistant nature. The literary pieces discussed are divided into three categories: prose, poetry and children's literature. As the majority of these works are in prose, this category will distinguish books as either fictional or non-fictional.

Below is a chart that maps the selection of a literary piece in a certain category.

Genre		Type	Title	Author	Intent (type of message)	Visibility (as perceived by target)
Prose	Non-fictional	journals, diaries, memoirs	Jurnalul unui Journalist fara Journal (The Journal of a Journalist without a Journal)	Ion D. Sirbu	Direct and indirect	Little visibility
			Red Horizons	Ion Mihai Pacepa	Direct, overt	High visibility

			La Apa Vavilonului (By the Rivers of Babylon)	Monica Lovinescu	Direct, overt	High visibility
			Jurnal Esential (An Essential Journal)	Monica Lovinescu	Direct, overt	High visibility
			Jurnal (1979-1989)	Mircea Zaciuc	Direct and indirect	Little visibility
		Prison literature	Jurnalul Fericirii (The Diary of Happiness)	Nicolae Steinhardt	Direct and indirect	High visibility
			Gherla	Paul Goma	Direct, overt	High visibility
	Fiction	Symbolic novels	Un om norocos (A Lucky Man)	Octavian Paler	covert, parable, metaphor	Little visibility evolved to high
Poetry			Indulgenta de Iarna (Winter Indulgence) & Haplea	Mircea Dinescu	Direct, overt	High visibility
			Totul (The Whole)	Ana Blandiana	Direct, overt	High Visibility
Children's Literature			O vedeta de pe strada mea (A superstar on my street)	Ana Blandiana	Indirect, covert	Little visibility evolved to high

4.1 Prose - Journals, Diaries and Memoirs

“The Journal of a Journalist without a Journal”, Ion D. Sirbu

In 1956, Associate Professor Ion D. Sirbu was sentenced to 1 year in prison due to an unflattering review of a communist piece of writing. The sentence was then changed to 7 years in prison. After his release, in 1963, he was placed under house arrest where he wrote “The Journal of a Journalist without a Journal”, a political novel comparable to Solzhenitsyn’s “Gulag

Achipelago”. Despite the title, the book is not a typical diary, but rather a near-photographic account of Romanian totalitarianism. Kept from 1983 until 1988, the Journal was published posthumously in 1991.

The message was overt, direct and pointed on the most dramatic changes in the Romanian society. Government urban planning meant to forcefully displace the village population was revealed: “Our new homes, buildings and neighborhoods are just some immense, boring and hideous grain elevators of solitude and misery (consequences of the proletarian division), barracks of some humanity who must forget the village of poverty, in exchange for urban misery. Look at our downtown building: two hundred cells organized around two stinky garbage dumpsters.”¹⁵⁷ [author’s translation]

He directly spoke about the failure of communism in Romania: “At the moment, we can tell and show at least a hundred of new things about the past - but regarding the future we keep revolving around the Communist Manifesto, without having the courage to recognize, honestly, that it is obsolete, utopian, absolutely unachievable...”¹⁵⁸ [author’s translation]

Sirbu also pointed out the surrender of those who were supposed to defend the traditional and religious values: “Our priests don’t read, don’t think, and don’t hope any more. They sing and incense, while being nothing more than the monkeys of official propaganda.”¹⁵⁹ [author’s translation]

¹⁵⁷ Ion D. Sirbu, *Jurnalul unui Jurnalist fara Jurnal* (Craiova: Scrisul Romanesc, 1991), 60

¹⁵⁸ Sirbu, 18

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 19

A master of metaphor, the author condemned the preference of the new regime for those with healthy origin (proletariat) to the disadvantage of those coming from unhealthy social classes (bourgeoisie & intellectuals). The metaphor is transparent: “Until now the trees aspired to the sky, their goal was the maximum of height and leaves towards plenty of light. Now the importance falls on the roots [...]. Outside, in the light, minimum of leaves, minimum of growth and minimum of demands...”¹⁶⁰ [author’s translation] The metaphor refers to the communists’ idea of giving primacy to proletariat and the ideal of achieving equality among its members while condemning the bourgeois values. The new man must be of healthy origins, usually coming from laborers’ families and necessarily aspiring to equality of members in a classless society. On the other hand, those whose parents were usually intellectuals or bourgeois were marginalized (for example, students expelled from school due to their belonging to a former bourgeois family). Their unhealthy origin made them unfit for the multilaterally developed society.

Similar to Doina Jela, Sirbu names fear as the most efficient control method practiced by communist authorities. “Simple men here, when cornered by police or Securitate, like an old mechanism of defense, swear: “*I did not do anything!*” They don’t say: “I did not do anything bad!” or “I did not do anything against the law” - but, extremely simple: “I did not do anything!” (Perhaps this

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 20

is the result of those times when absolutely anything you do could become a count of indictment.)”¹⁶¹

Sirbu’s journal was an extraordinary aesthetic literary achievement of ironic cynicism through the use of words and images with multiple connotations. The book’s sections are not merely images from the author’s life, but rather criticisms of the clash of the true individual with the communist construction of the individual. The themes were generally valid and drawn from the totalitarian experience; although masterfully used, the irony is bitter as it reveals the annihilation of conscience, the effect of total control over the population, the destruction of a traditional way of living, replacement of historical social, cultural and political values and the implacable transformation of Romania under dictatorship.

“Red Horizons”, Ion Mihai Pacepa

Ion Pacepa was the highest rank official from the Communist Bloc to defect into a NATO country. In 1978 when he requested political asylum in the USA, he was Ceausescu’s chief national security adviser and state secretary of Ministry of Interior. Although not a writer, he published “Red Horizons”, a memoir, in 1987 in the USA. After two months, a Romanian edition was published in New York and distributed to Romanian emigrants. Copies of this edition were smuggled into Romania. In 1988 Radio Free Europe started broadcasting the book in a serial-story program which lasted

¹⁶¹ Sirbu, 186

5 weeks. Even though Ceausescu had waged an incessant war against the radio broadcaster and listening to it was prohibited, “the streets of Bucharest were empty during the broadcasts”¹⁶² of “Red Horizons”.

The book offers intimate and often shocking details of the inner workings of Ceausescu’s regime. It describes the last several weeks Pacepa spent in Ceausescu’s government and revealed a far different image than the one presented to the world by communist authorities. It is the story of a communist leader who, “cleverly using various influence operations has simultaneously been able to gather enough Western political support and cold cash to keep his moribund, self-serving regime alive, and to build the first true Communist dynasty in history.”¹⁶³As opposed to the official image of the most beloved son of the Romanian people and the regional leader praised by Western regimes, especially after the refusal to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the book displays the unvarnished truth. Ceausescu was “an international terrorist who lived an extravagant luxurious life paid by drugs and weapons trafficking, as well as hard currency for selling his own citizens.”¹⁶⁴ [author’s translation]

Pacepa openly spoke about the surveillance tactics and Ceausescu’s plans of monitoring the entire nation. As long as installing microphones in every home was difficult, a telephone was a perfect alternative: “This is not

¹⁶² Forward to *Orizonturi Rosii*, by Ion Mihai Pacepa (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010), 7

¹⁶³ Ion M. Pacepa, forward to *Red Horizons*, by Ion M. Pacepa (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1987), xvii

¹⁶⁴ Forward to *Orizonturi Rosii*, 7

just a normal telephone. It also serves as a very sensitive microphone, capable of recording all conversations in the room where it is installed. If this telephone is approved the only kind legally allowed in Romania, it will open a new era of broad-scale electronic surveillance, without the tedious need for surreptitious entries into private homes to install microphones.”¹⁶⁵ The dictator is shown to be a shrewd and cruel manipulator of terror, yet often at the mercy of his even shrewder and crueller wife, who revels in the secretly videotaped sexual seductions of opponents of the regime or those who she despised.

In communist Romania, even the typewriters became dangerous enough to be placed under strict regulation. After having all typewriters belonging to the state registered by Securitate, Ceausescu ordered a draft of a future Decree of the State Council regarding the private ownership of typewriters: “The renting or lending of a typewriter is forbidden to all Romanian citizens. No one may own a typewriter without authorization from the militia. Those who already have typewriters should immediately ask for such authorization; if it is refused, the owner must sell the typewriter to someone who has an authorization or surrender it to the militia.”¹⁶⁶

Writing, in general, was important to be kept under control in order to identify any person disseminating messages against the regime. Pacepa remembered Ceausescu’s order: “I’ll give you three months to get handwriting

¹⁶⁵ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, 134

¹⁶⁶ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, 200

samples for the whole Romanian population, starting with children in the first grade. No exceptions.”

Shortly after its broadcast in Romania, Vlad Georgescu, director of the Free Europe Romanian program, suspiciously died from cancer, just like his predecessor, Noel Bernard. Evidence found in the Securitate files after the fall of communism indicated that both were assassinated by Romanian secret police, using a device that induced cancer in the unsuspecting victim.

“Red Horizons” portrays communist Romania in the 1980’s to bear a close resemblance to George Orwell’s fictional regime in his novel “1984”. The book was published in Romania only in 1992. Protected by the US government, Pacepa not only published his memoirs, but he released to the world a public document that condemned the Romanian totalitarian regime. The book sent a direct message highly visible through channels like Radio Free Europe as well as through copies brought to Romania illegally. To be sure, Pacepa himself was a suspicious character, having directed the secret police. Still, at the same time the message was clearly perceived as dangerous by the communist authorities; they spared no efforts to curtail the distribution of the book, including assassination of those responsible for its dissemination. Shortly after the Romanian Revolution, *Adevarul (The Truth)* newspaper started publishing *Red Horizons* as serial story and mentioned that the book had “an indisputable role in overthrowing Ceausescu’s dictatorship.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Forward to *Orizonturi Rosii*, 8

“By the Rivers of Babylon” & “An Essential Diary”, Monica Lovinescu

Monica Lovinescu was the most important female figure of the Romanian exile. She leaved the homeland in 1947 when she was offered a scholarship in Paris and was never able to return to her home country. In 1948, she was granted political asylum in France and since 1962 she became the most reputed voice of Radio Free Europe. Her mother was exterminated in a communist prison because she refused to persuade her daughter to return to Romania, - one example among many of the fate of ordinary citizens opposing the Ceausescu regime.

Parts of Lovinescu’s diary were assembled in a volume called “La Apa Vavilonului” (“By the Rivers of Babylon”) and published in Romania only after the fall of communism. The book encompasses parts of the diary she kept in Romania from 1941 to 1947. Although the original diaries were destroyed, the most important parts were gathered in the “By the Rivers of Babylon” in an attempt to “check the biography.”¹⁶⁸

Lovinescu witnessed the Soviet occupation and the assault over social, political and cultural life in Romania by Dej’s regime. In August 1944, she noted in her diary: “It is impossible to set myself free from the events, to not clench my fists helplessly and to not fight against a situation that I cannot

¹⁶⁸ Monica Lovinescu, *La Apa Vavilonului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010), 7

change. I feel like in a prison with bars coming closer and closer around me.”¹⁶⁹
[author’s translation]

The panic generated by Dej’s monetary reform in August 1944 presents young Lovinescu with a society adrift, unknown to her: “I discover “the line”, this symbol of human decadence, roadway to communism. Taken one by one, the people can be beautiful or interesting, but the line disfigures them with the desires and anxiety that drove them there. [...] If I would still believe in Hell, this is how I would see it.”¹⁷⁰ [author’s translation]

Monica Lovinescu as well as her husband, Virgil Ierunca, kept close to many Romanian intellectuals. A note in her diary regarding Nicolae Steinhardt’s possible arrest, in 1973, shows they were ready to engage in a mass media offensive to help him. At the same time she draws attention to communist tactics of arresting and then imprisoning intellectuals for writings deemed dangerous for the regime. “N. Steinhardt is extremely unhappy. The Securitate searched his place and confiscated the manuscript in which he described his conversion to orthodoxy. Now he expects to be arrested. It was decided that when he writes me the word <<cathedrals>> we will start the offensive in the French mass media and save him. We do not know if he would be able to endure a new detention.”¹⁷¹ [author’s translation]

While “By the River of Babylon” is a mix of memoirs and diary excerpts, “Jurnal Esential” (“An Essential Journal”) is an authentic diary. It reveals

¹⁶⁹ Lovinescu, *La Apa Vavilonului*, 58-59

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 60

¹⁷¹ Lovinescu, *La Apa Vavilonului*, 465

“collective psychological storms which we endured during Ceausescu’s era, in all its awfulness, and sometimes doubled by comic and absurd.”¹⁷² [author’s translation] The notes are extremely lucid and the text is incredibly concise. The text strikes through Lovinescu’s ability to say so much with very few words exemplified in these notes from 1983, demonstrating the day-to-day activities of intellectuals opposed to the regime:

“Monday February 28th

The texts sent by Dorin Tudoran to be released by Free Europe – some 100 paged. No matter how prudent presented: *dissidence*.”¹⁷³

“Monday March 7th

Broadcast, V. on E. Barbu’s plagiarism, which will turn out badly (they will believe that Tudoran sent it again... but how can you change it?), me on Koestler. Then with Gelu and Alain out for a coffee. Gelu believes that they will arrest Dorin Tudoran for sending to FE. That’s what we are afraid of. But how can’t we grant him this wish?”¹⁷⁴ [author’s translation]

In 1984 she notes:

“Sunday June 3rd

Yesterday, from Goma, Suisse Romande’s videotape broadcasting the Danube-Black Sea Canal opening. Excelent title, from the report and journalist’s commentaries, William Heinzer, right down to the interview with

¹⁷² Ioana Parvulescu, forward to *Jurnal Esential*, by Monica Lovinescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010), 9

¹⁷³ Monica Lovinescu, *Jurnal Esential* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010), 86

¹⁷⁴ Lovinescu, *Jurnal Esential*, 87

Goma, who says everything that needs to be said and nothing more, with striking expressions such as “The canal is for Romanians what Auschwitz was for the Jews or Vorkuta for Russians.” “The bomb” of the broadcast, so to say, the interview conducted in Bucharest with Dorin Tudoran who points out not only to Ceausescu, but the entire system.”¹⁷⁵ [author’s translation]

The writing is simple and direct, imagistic and unfiltered. The message is clear despite the fact that often the clauses are missing the verbs. As Ioana Parvulescu notes, “the diary is elliptical, fast, without the slightest care for style, with an obvious documentary scope.”¹⁷⁶ [author’s translation] Authorities knew the communist regime is the target of Lovinescu’s criticism and went as far as attempting to assassinate her in 1977, in order to silent her.

“Journal (1979-1989)” , Mircea Zaciu

Mircea Zaciu was a Romanian literary historian a prominent intellectual and member of Romanian Academy. He kept a diary during the 1980’s which coincided with the darkest years of Romanian totalitarianism. It was first published in 1993. The author was mostly preoccupied to record cultural and political events as well as subversive jokes or conversations. The diary is extraordinary diverse and it reconstructs the last decade of communist

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 130

¹⁷⁶ Parvulescu, forward, 9

Romania. Although subjective, the author assumed the witness position and recorded the facts he lived through.

Below are a few aspects of reality in a “system based on imprisonment.”¹⁷⁷ Zaciú describes a conversation with a professor about the precarious situation of the healthcare system: “It is not only the lack of medicaments, wards without heat, but mainly infestation of the majority of our hospitals that make the patients dying on their feet, in droves. The surgeries are not an issue, as we do have world-class surgeons [...]; but the post-operative treatment is measured up to the past century.”¹⁷⁸ [author’s translation]

The shortage of food and basic necessities became permanent in the 1980’s when Ceausescu made the decision to export most of the agriculture and industrial production in order to pay off the foreign debt. “The stores are literally devastated, they barely have something on the shelves. In butcheries, no meat. [...] In Poland, lots of strikes. Moscow opens the Olympics in state. The chef of the Olympic village announces that for the first time, the athletes will be served fresh meat, not frozen... Romanian meat, perhaps...”¹⁷⁹

Although talking about a very serious invasion of private correspondence by communist authorities responsible with mail surveillance, Zaciú ironizes the Securitate’s agents (“the guys”) who will be exasperated trying to find the meaning of a telegram. “I read: *“The question is now in Basheba’s hands.”* I am

¹⁷⁷ Zaciú, 7

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 70

¹⁷⁹ Zaciú, 140

thinking, laughing inside myself how much aggravation “the guys” will have to deal with because of this telegram sent from Iasi: what is *now* in Basheba’s hands? Why *now*? Where was it until now? And what is “that”? An object? A project? A business? “¹⁸⁰ [author’s translation]

The political indoctrination in school was a recurrent theme as the author was himself a professor. The communist government was preoccupied to ensure that politics occupies a central role in the educational process. Recording a visit of the Education Secretary to a school and her participation in a history lesson about Renaissance and Humanism, Zaciu, emphasizes the brain-washing practiced in Romanian schools. “The Secretary came in front of the classroom to ask about “some issues”. In the beginning, she proudly asked: “*Children, who is the biggest Romanian humanist?* Silence, some hesitation.”¹⁸¹ [author’s translation] As the students failed to identify Ceausescu as the biggest Romanian humanist, the Secretary started admonishing the professor “that he does not pay enough attention to the political education of his students and he does not study enough the documents of the twelfth Congress of the Communist Party. “*What Renaissance, comrade, what Divine Comedy, are you chasing the wild goose when your students have no clue who is our most important humanist?*”¹⁸² [author’s translation]

The author is the direct witness of reality: “In the remaining pages, I barely observe the privacy, as I am more interested to meticulously record the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 71

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 106

¹⁸² Zaciu, 106

reality in which I lived, I resisted, and I survived.”¹⁸³ Aside from the chain of records, the journal is also a reflection over the degradation of human relations governed by dictatorial principles. By protecting and promoting basic liberties, ethics and professionalism, the literary society was involuntarily engaged in a conflict with the dictatorial regime. As Zaciú points out “any virtual intellectual resistance against the system had to be promptly eradicated.”¹⁸⁴

4.2 Prose - Prison Literature

“The Diary of Happiness”, Nicolae Steinhardt

Nicolae Steinhardt was a Romanian intellectual of Jewish origin arrested in 1959 for rejecting the Securitate’s offer to betray his friends and become informer. In 1959, a group of Romanian intellectuals, known as Noica-Pillat group, was arrested. The Securitate asked Steinhardt to become the crown witness in the trial. He refused the proposal and denied the plot against the socialist order and the hostile discussions that he allegedly participated in. As a consequence he was arrested, tried and sentenced to 13 years of forced labor. Following the general amnesty of political prisoners in August of 1964, he was released and formally completed his conversion from Judaism to Orthodoxy. In 1980 he entered the monkhood at Rohia and became the monastery’s librarian.

Steinhardt’s masterpiece, “Jurnalul Fericității” (“The Diary of Happiness”), is “a multisonous text in which memory, cultural references, stenographical

¹⁸³ Zaciú, foreward to *Jurnal (1979-1989)* by Mircea Zaciú (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1993), 7

¹⁸⁴ Zaciú, foreward, 8

reality, and philosophical, religious or political meditation overlap, paradoxical for a diary which does not follow the chronology, without giving the sensation of discontinuity.”¹⁸⁵ [author’s translation] The diary encompasses the period between 1924 and 1971 and it was first published in 1990. Steinhardt wrote a second version of the journal after the first was confiscated by the Securitate in 1972. It was returned to its author in 1975 and re-confiscated in 1984.

The journal was written retrospectively which gives the book its special nature of a mix between memoirs and diary kept in absence of pen and paper. “Pen and paper are not in the least expected in prison. Therefore it would be dishonest to try advocating that this “journal” was chronologically kept; it is written *après coup*, on the strength of recent and vivid memories.”¹⁸⁶

George Ardeleanu, author of the most comprehensive monograph on Steinhardt, identifies two major recurring themes in Steinhardt work: “disavowal of all utopias, especially of the two totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century, fascism and communism” and “the obsessive theme of freedom.”¹⁸⁷ [author’s translation]

As the Securitate allows him a few days to make up his mind and become the prosecution witness in his friend’s trial, Oscar Steinhardt, the father, advises his son to go to prison: “Why did you come back home, bastard? You gave them the impression that you are in two minds or perhaps that you

¹⁸⁵ George Ardeleanu, *Nicolae Steinhardt: monografie, antologie comentata, receptare critica* (Brasov: Aula, 2000), 70

¹⁸⁶ Nicolae Steinhardt , *Jurnalul Fericirii* (Iasi: Polirom, 2008), 50

¹⁸⁷ Ardeleanu, *N. Steinhardt si paradoxurile libertatii*, 9

consider the possibility to betray your friends. [...] You should not accept to be the prosecution witness for the world. Come on, go now.”¹⁸⁸ [author’s translation] Oscar paradoxically advises his son to exchange his physical freedom for moral freedom, strength of character and clear conscience. “It is true, dad tells me, that you will have very difficult days. But your nights are going to be calm [...] you will sleep well. Whereas if you accept to be the prosecution witness you will have, of course, pretty good days, but the nights will be dreadful.”¹⁸⁹ [author’s translation]

Steinhardt remembers the intimidating methods used by secret police in order to convince him to accept the deal and become an informer: “An entire “comedy” follows: the curtains (in dark velvet) are pulled in order to create a panic mood. The committee goes in and out.”¹⁹⁰ [author’s translation] Once in prison, the political detainees were subject to abominable treatments accompanied by cold and hunger. The direct and simple language creates an extraordinary vivid image: “We are shivering, we feel overwhelmed by dirtiness – and we are hungry. Due to snow the supply was perhaps interrupted. We merely receive, once a day and at irregular hours, a cold pellet of corn bread. We don’t have water any more. The bucket is overflowing. Weird, instead of neutralizing the feces’ odor, the frost intensifies it. We are waiting for the

¹⁸⁸ Steinhardt, 70

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 71

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 108

arrival of corn bread like captive animals [...]. The pellet is ice-cold and it's made out of unboiled corn flower, merely baked.”¹⁹¹ [author's translation]

The book has an indisputable documentary nature recording an unfolding of tragedy. In a note from 1958, Steinhardt remembers the Red Army marching on the streets of Bucharest as well as his father's words condemning the passivity of Romanians who did not seem to understand the consequences of occupation. “You stand and look, you idiot, you all stand and look and have no clue what lies ahead, look how they laugh, they will cry bitter tears, and you, too... go home...” ¹⁹²[author's translation]

On the other hand the journal is a story of survival through faith (Steinhardt is baptized orthodox in prison); it is also a “novel of a destiny” and a “spiritual biography” ¹⁹³ Prison experience translates into a world where only essential things count. The communist prisons were infernal, but Steinhardt found his inner freedom through religion, hence the apparently paradoxical title. “The Diary of Happiness” main theme is freedom and how to protect it at least at individual level within the totalitarian system.

The Securitate's interest in a book that was not even published and had no chance to pass the censorship indicates that the writing *per se* was perceived as a threat to the totalitarian establishment. For authorities, the author of the journal was a hostile element who was to be silenced or eliminated if

¹⁹¹ Steinhardt, 184-185

¹⁹² Ibid, 249

¹⁹³ Gheorghe Glodeanu, *Incursiuni in Literatura Diasporei si a Dizidentei* (Bucharest: Libra, 1999), 207

necessary. Aside from the description of the prison atrocities, even the notes that don't belong to prison years are fundamentally opposing the totalitarian construction. Writing to disclose the intimidating practices of Securitate, the opposition to Russian occupation, the religious experience to transcend any type of confinement imposed by an atheist regime, are all instances of resisting a government dictated existence. The essence of Steinhardt's existential project was freedom and he never abandoned it.¹⁹⁴

*"Gherla-Latesti"*¹⁹⁵, Paul Goma

Paul Goma is a writer and dissident of communist Romania who was forced in exile in France where he currently lives. He continued to be supervised by Securitate until the fall of communism. In 1956 he was expelled from school and sentenced to 2 years in prison on the charge of attempting to organize a strike at the University and served at Jilava and Gherla prisons. The former political prisoner was placed under house arrest until 1963 due to his anti-communist attitude and keeping a personal journal considered to be of hostile nature. In 1968, when Romania refused to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, he became a member of the communist Party. In 1968, "seduced by the temporary "liberalization" of literature"¹⁹⁶, he tries to publish "Ostinato" his book based on his experience with the secret police, but

¹⁹⁴ Ardeleanu, *N. Steinhardt si paradoxurile libertatii*, 102

¹⁹⁵ Prison facility in Cluj county, which functioned as political prison during communism in Romania

¹⁹⁶ Vasile, 770

ensorship did not allow its publication. Shortly after he sent it in the West, and the book was published in France and West Germany three years later, in 1971.¹⁹⁷

“Gherla-Latesti” is a novel based on his prison experience and first published by Gallimard in France in 1976, after the censorship denied its publication in Romania. It was published in Romania only in 1990. The novel presents as a conversation between a former Gherla inmate and his French friend. “The conversational structure of *Gherla* as a whole is the novel’s strongest feature. Through the voices of the principal narrator, as well as those of fellow prisoners and camp officials, the routine of incarceration comes vividly to life.”¹⁹⁸

The prison experience described by Goma and by all those who wrote about prison experience was always meant to be a window; for the West to see the violation of human rights in Romania; for the Romanians to see how totalitarianism works; and for the communist authorities to see that the truth eventually comes to light.

In *Gherla*, the friends talk about the brutality of the investigation: “You asked me if then I was badly beaten. I do not know if the adequate word is *badly*. [...] So, you were beaten from the moment of arrest, followed by the investigation – which was a long beating – detention, forced domicile. I did not say: *ending with*, because whoever falls into their hands cannot escape any

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸ Segel, 311

more, not even after the release.”¹⁹⁹ [author’s translation] The tortures are also part of friends’ dialogue: “It was only after they rinsed me, of blood and of... of everything that I realized: I did not have open wounds, just the nails...It was not hard to count the losses, because I only counted the unbroken nails [...] total: three unbroken nails...”²⁰⁰ [author’s translation]

Goma was revoked Romanian citizenship and he denied his French citizenship becoming a stateless person until 2013. Even though he was not a Romanian citizen any more, the Securitate had numerous attempts to assassinate him. The visible and overt anti-communist message of his writings was perceived as threatening by the Romanian authorities. As visible in “Gherla”, structured as a dialogue, Goma’s narrative strategy is to emphasize the idea of speaking out. The purpose is “not only to alert the West as to the true nature of communist rule in Romania but to encourage other former inmates to share their experience as well.”²⁰¹

4.3 Fictional Prose – Symbolic Novel

“A Lucky Man”, Octavian Paler

¹⁹⁹ Paul Goma, *Gherla-Latesti* (Paris: Author’s Publisher, 2005), 24

²⁰⁰ Goma, 176

²⁰¹ Segel, *The Walls Behind the Curtain*, 311

Octavian Paler was a Romanian intellectual and a substitute member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party between 1974 and 1979, as well as a member of the Great National Assembly from 1980 to 1985. He became a target of Securitate due to his pro-occidental views and his criticism of the Communist Party.

Immediately after its publication, in 1984, “Un Om Norocos” (“A Lucky Man”) novel was publicly condemned and public trials were organized to denigrate and judge the author’s deviation from the communist norms. Monica Lovinescu remembered Paler’s public exposure as hostile element during a show literary trial that was organized in a plant: “Last night I discovered in *Contemporanul* a record of a conference meant to expose Paler (for his novel *A Lucky Man*), organized by the public library [...] in a plant in Bucharest, where all kind of lathe operators denounce the “sordid” and “dangerous for the youth” vision.”²⁰² At the same time, all articles defending the author were not published and the only voice protesting against the public condemnation of the book was Monica Lovinescu’s at Free Europe. Paler lost his right to publish and with the exception of one book, none of his writings were published during communism.

“A Lucky Man” is a symbolic novel which passed the censorship due the pure ignorance of those responsible with verification of conformity and their incapacity to decode the message. The main character of the novel, Daniel Petric, a sculptor without talent, is hospitalized in a nursing home after a few

²⁰² Lovinescu, *Jurnal Esential*, 175

failed attempts of re-education. The nursing home is isolated on the sea shore, in close vicinity of a swamp and a fishermen village. Here he discovers an absurd reality dominated by fear, hatred, and violence. Confined in a vicious circle he is able to adjust in order to satisfy his ambitions of entering the power sphere of the confined system. Up to a point, Petric is a lucky man, but he is deemed to become a victim of the same power forces that he wanted to be a part of.

The message was covert, but the readership decoded the message by reading between the lines. The more they read, the clearer the message became. “The power relations become visible as we progress in reading the novel. The author’s subversive bet becomes more and more clear and the construction of parable develops progressively, in a rapid demystification.”²⁰³ [author’s translation]

Petric is the intellectual who feeds the cult of personality in order to benefit from a system which valorizes his lack of talent: “I never made much of the virtues that asked me to give up. I always preferred those that allowed me to live and I could not care less of those who considered them rather vices, instead of virtues.”²⁰⁴ [author’s translation] He distances himself from the people of the swamp, but his progress is paradoxically limited not by his lack of talent, but by the failure of the system itself. The nursing home is communist

²⁰³ Daniel Cristea-Enache, “Un azil de batrani – *Un om norocos*, by Octavian Paler”, *Atelier LiterNet*, accessed August 1, 2015 <http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/7244/Daniel-Cristea-Enache/Un-azil-de-batrani-Un-om-norocos-de-Octavian-Paler.html>

²⁰⁴ Octavian Paler, *Un om norocos* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Romaneasca, 1984), 263

Romania bordered by the Black Sea, Danube and Danube Delta. It is a place where people are hopelessly captive. The mix of narrative plans, reality and oneiric, as Petric keeps some records of his dreams, creates a fantastic novel developing in a nightmare paradigm that no one is able to escape.

4.4. Poetry

“Arise Gheorghe! Arise Ioan!”, Radu Gyr

In 1958, in the middle of the collectivization process initiated and conducted by Gheorghiu Dej between 1949 and 1962, Radu Gyr, poet and journalist, wrote his poem “Ridica-te Gheorghe! Ridica-te Ioane!” (“Arise Gheorghe! Arise Ioane!”). Due to this poem which overtly condemned the collectivization, Gyr was sentenced to death. Later on, the sentence was changed to 25 years of forced labor. During his imprisonment, he was constantly refused medical treatment, starved and tortured. He is released after 6 years due to the general amnesty of political prisoners in 1964. He was imprisoned twice during communist years and spent a total of approximately 20 years in jail.

The poem “Ridica-te Gheorghe, Ridica-te Ioane!” was a direct protest against the agricultural policies implemented by the communist regime as well as a call to Romanian peasantry to oppose the confiscation of private goods (animals and means of production) and property. The title includes two of the most popular first names in Romania, Gheorghe and Ion (with the alternative - Ioan), especially in the country side, the part of Romania affected by brutal

collectivization. The message is explicit and points out to the politics behind collectivization; Romanians need to rise not merely to oppose the confiscation of goods and properties forcefully taken away, but to defend universal values: freedom (“for your free sky of tomorrow” or “just to drink the freedom from wells”), historical identity (“for your people’s blood”), ideals and hopes (“a pile of horizons and a hat full of stars”), faith (“To place your burning kiss/On beams, stoops, doors, and icons”).

<p>Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Nu pentru-o lopată de rumenă pâine, Nu pentru pătule, nu pentru pogoane, Ci pentru văzduhul tău liber de mâine, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Pentru sângele neamului tău curs prin șanțuri, Pentru cântecul tău țintuit în piroane, Pentru lacrima soarelui tău pus în lanțuri, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Nu pentru mânia scrâșnită-n măsele, Ci ca să aduni chiuind pe tăpșane O claie de zări și-o căciulă de stele, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Așa, ca să bei libertatea din ciuturi Și-n ea să te-afunzi ca un cer în bulboane Și zarzării ei peste tine să-i scuturi, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Și ca să pui tot sărutul fierbinte Pe praguri, pe prispe, pe uși, pe icoane, Pe toate ce slobode-ți ies înainte, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p> <p>Ridică-te, Gheorghe, pe lanțuri, pe funii! Ridică-te, Ioane, pe sfinte ciolane! Și sus, spre lumina din urmă-a furtunii, Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!</p>	<p>Arise, Gheorghe, Arise, Ioan!</p> <p>Not for a shovel of brown crusty bread, Not for the barns, not for the fields, But for your unobstructed sky of tomorrow, Arise, Gheorghe, arise, Ioane!</p> <p>For the blood of your people spilled over the ditches, For your riveted song, For the tear of your enchained sun, Arise, Gheorghe, Arise, Ioane!</p> <p>Not for the furious gnash of your teeth, But to joyfully bring together on slopes, A pile of horizons and a hat full of stars, Arise, Gheorghe, Arise, Ioane!</p> <p>Just so to drink the freedom from wells, To sink in it like a sky in the water, To shake down its apricots over you, Arise, Gheorghe, arise, Ioane!</p> <p>To place your burning kiss On beams, stoops, doors, and icons, On everything that you freely could get, Arise, Gheorghe, arise, Ioane!</p> <p>Arise, Gheorghe, on chains and on ropes! Arise, Ioane, over sacred ashes! And up, towards the sun that comes after storm, Arise, Gheorghe, Arise, Ioane!</p> <p>[author's translation]</p>
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“Winter Indulgence” & “Haplea”, Mircea Dinescu

Mircea Dinescu is a Romanian poet who actively engaged in protests against Ceausecu’s regime of terror, as well as against the destruction of Romanian identity through communist policies aimed to transform the cities and ruin the traditional villages. He was critical of the regime and in 1981 he was able to publish his poetry book, “Democratia Naturii” (“The Democracy of Nature”). His poetry was sarcastic and pointed out to the distortion of reality. The irony was directly targeting the abnormality of communist construction using its own clichés. The result of this combination is a “shock effect, the assemblage of the oblivion conducts to an unbearable tension.”²⁰⁵ [author’s translation]

Indulgenta de Iarna	Winter Indulgence
Ferește-mă Doamne de cei ce-mi vor binele	God save me from those who wish me good
de băieții simpatici	From nice guys
dispuși oricînd la o turnătorie voioasă	Ready anytime for a funny delation
de preotul cu magnetofonul sub sutană	From the priest with the magnetic recorder under his cassock
de plapuma sub care nu poți intra fără să dai bună seara	From the blanket that you can't cover with without saying good evening
de dictatorii incurcați în strunele harfei	From the dictators lost in the harp's cords
de cei supărați pe propriile lor popoare	From those upset on their own people
acum cînd se-apropie iarna	Now when winter is upon us
și n-avem nici ziduri înalte	And we do not have high walls
nici giște pe Capitoliu	Nor geese on Capitol
doar mari provizii de îngăduință și spaimă	Just stocks of tolerance and fear.
	[author's translation]

²⁰⁵ Sorin Alexandrescu, Forward to *Moartea Citeste Ziarul*, by Mircea Dinescu (Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca, 1990), 9

In 1988 he tried to publish his book, “Moartea Citeste Ziarul (“Death is Reading the Newspaper”), but the censorship apparatus turned it down. He got fired from work, lost his right to publish, and placed under house arrest. Shortly after, the French newspaper *Liberation* published an interview in which Dinescu speaks openly about the terror practiced by the Bucharest totalitarian regime. By now he was one of the most important voices of Romanian resistance. While his previous poetry combines realism with sarcasm and irony, the new volume “Death is Reading the Newspaper” is direct, metaphor is rarely present and the language is brutally overt. The book is eventually published in The Netherlands, in Romanian, in the summer of 1989. One of the poems included in the volume was “*Haplea*”. The term/title, as well as the poem are untranslatable, but the meaning of the Romanian word is that of an inept, hungry and greedy person, which was clearly identified as Ceausescu.

Like in the past, Dinescu condemned the communist policies of destruction of Romanian society lead by a demonic creature – Haplea. “Haplea breathlessly swallows church bells and lays waste the land with his “mechanical tongue”.”²⁰⁶ The poem also talks about the land of Wallachia (one of the three historical provinces of Romania next to Moldova and Transylvania) which was subject to an implacable destiny of destruction, starting with diverse barbarian people and ending with Haplea, “who is a traitor as well as a tyrant”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Andrei Codrescu, *The Muse is Always Half-dressed in New Orleans: And Other Essays* (New York: Picador USA/St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 100

²⁰⁷ Codrescu, *The Muse is Always Half-dressed in New Orleans*, 100

As we have seen the aesthetic of Dinescu's old poetry was replaced by the direct message situated at the level of morale in politics. Dinescu gave up the literary conventions to favor the frankness and brutality of the language to describe a brutal transformation of reality.

"The Whole", Ana Blandiana

Ana Blandiana (pseudonym for Otilia-Valeria Coman) is a contemporary Romanian poet. She made her debut in 1959, while still in high school, when two poems playfully sent to *Tribuna* magazine were published under the pseudonym which she kept ever since. As her father was a priest who spent years in prison and was released in 1964 through general amnesty, her chances of being published were almost null. As she clarified in an interview with Horia Tabacu noted in *Evenimentul Zilei* article, in July 12, 2014, "the magazine's editor, who in the meantime had found out that my father was a political detainee, explained that my joke was in fact a chance, because I could not have been published with my real name. [...] my luck did not last much, because the authorities from Oradea announced countrywide publications that "the daughter of an enemy of the people is hidden under the pen name of Ana Blandiana"."

In late 1980's she became critical of the communists as the political climate in Romania was increasingly repressive. Her work was entirely banned twice by the authorities. In 1985, literary journal *Amfiteatru* published four of Blandiana's poems in which she commented on the new wave of cultural

repression, social and economic difficulties that Romanian population was facing. That edition of *Amfiteatru* was withdrawn within hours of its publications, the editors were terminated the employment and the author lost her right to publish and was totally banned by the authorities. Despite the immediate actions taken by the authorities, the poems were distributed through a limited samizdat. Nevertheless *The Independent*, an English daily, devoted an entire page to it, in which each word of the poem “Totul” (“The Whole”) was “decoded” in order to reveal the true picture of the Romanian dictatorship.”²⁰⁸

Incredibly elliptic, without any verbs, the poem is a powerful sequence of nouns, like pieces of puzzle that come together to create a shocking image of communist Romania.

Totul	The Whole
Frunze, cuvinte, lacrimi,	Leaves, words, tears,
cutii de chibrituri, pisici,	match boxes, cats,
tramvaie câteodată, cozi la făină,	sometimes tramways, lines for flour,
gărgărițe, sticle goale, discursuri,	ladybugs, empty bottles, speeches,
imagini lungite de televizor,	images widened by the television display,
gândaci de Colorado, benzină,	potato beetles, gas,
stegulețe, portrete cunoscute,	little flags, familiar portraits,
Cupa Campionilor Europeni,	Champions League,
mașini cu butelii, mere refuzate la export,	gas cylinders, apples rejected from export,
ziare, franzele, ulei în amestec, garoafe,	newspapers, bread loaves, mixed oil, carnations,
întâmpinări la aeroport, cico, batoane,	airport welcomes, sodas, bread sticks
Salam București, iaurt dietetic,	Bucuresti sausage, dietetic yoghurt,
țigări cu kenturi, ouă de Crevedia,	gypsy women with Kent cigarettes, Crevedia eggs,
zvonuri, serialul de sâmbătă seara,	rumors, the Saturday night TV series,
cafea cu înlocuitori,	coffee substitutes,

²⁰⁸ Harold B. Segel, *The Columbia Guide to the Literatures of Eastern Europe Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 77

lupta popoarelor pentru pace, coruri, producția la hectar, Gerovital, aniversări, compot bulgăresc, adunarea oamenilor muncii, vin de regiune superior, adidași, bancuri, băieții de pe Calea Victoriei, pește oceanic, Cântarea României, totul.	the nations' fight for peace, choirs, the yield per acre, Gerovital, birthdays, Bulgarian compote, the working people's assembly, premium wine, sneakers, jokes, the guys on Victoria Avenue, wild caught fish, Cântarea României, the whole. [author's translation]
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4.5. Children's Literature

"A superstar on My Street", Ana Blandiana

In 1988, after she was banned twice by the communist regime, Blandiana is able to publish a book of poetry for children, a third in a series, "Intamplari de pe strada mea" ("Events on my street"). The publication resulted in a new interdiction to publish, after the book passed the censorship as children's literature. Although disguised, the "intended satire of the authorities"²⁰⁹, is incredibly transparent.

<p>O vedeta de pe strada mea</p> <p>Înainte de a merge mai departe Trebuie sa deschid o paranteza (Adica un capitol din carte Sau din poveste) Despre cineva care nu este Nici maidanez, nici maidaneza.</p> <p>De fapt, in cazul lui, Epitetele nu explica nimic, Mai bine sa va spui Ca este vorba de Arpagic.</p> <p>Si când am spus Arpagic Cred ca e suficient</p>	<p>A superstar on my street</p> <p>Before I move forward I need to open a parenthesis (Namely chapter of the book or of story) About someone who is not A mongrel male, nor mongrel female.</p> <p>In fact, in his case The epithets do not explain anything, Better to say That I am talking about Arpagic.</p> <p>And when I say Arpagic I think it is enough</p>
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²⁰⁹ Segel, *The Columbia Guide to the Literatures*, 77

<p>Ca sa nu mai explic Si sa stiti pe moment</p> <p>Cine este acest personaj, Pe care-mi permit Sa-l numesc cel mai vestit Motan din oras. Caruia i s-au scris poezii Si i s-au facut portrete, Asa cum se obisnuieste printre vedete;</p> <p>Despre care, pe lânga toate, S-au facut si desene animate Palpitante si pline de umor Date la televizor.</p> <p>Ei bine, dupa toate aceste succese De necontestat Si de necrezut, Arpagic, cum era si de asteptat, S-a cam increzut.</p> <p>Dar nici nu e de mirare: Când iese la plimbare Toata strada emotionata Se imbulzeste sa-l vada;</p> <p>Ferestrele se dau de perete, Copiii uita de caiete, Crengile se apleaca peste gard, E o aglomeratie ca pe bulevard,</p> <p>Masinile sunt obligate Sa incetineasca, I se arunca ocheade În maniera pisiceasca,</p> <p>I se dau flori, Pâine cu sare, Câte-o scrisoare În plic Si toata lumea striga „Arpagic!”</p> <p>El inaintea important si hai-hui, Da un sfat, asculta un protest mai sonor (Ca acela al unei closte cu pui Împotriva unui motan vânator),</p> <p>Distribuie zâmbete, strângeri de laba, Câte o amenda Sau, mai degraba, Admonestare Si toata lumea e atenta Si recunoscatoare.</p> <p>Ba se suspenda (sa vezi si sa nu crezi) Pâna si luptele dintre maidaneze si maidanezi! Si (culme a culmilor) mi s-a relatat Ca un soricel, Care-astepta sa fie insfacat De Domnia-Sa,</p> <p>Scâncea subtirel Printre suspine: „Ce cinste pentru mine Sa ma inghita chiar El!”</p> <p>În aceasta situatie nazdravana Mi se pare normal Ca Arpagic nu-si mai incape in blana Si se crede fenomenal.</p> <p>Încât chiar ma mir, in consecinta, Ca mai raspunde când il chem</p>	<p>And I don't need to explain So you could figure out</p> <p>Who is this personage, Which I dare To call the most famous Tomcat in town. To whom poems have been written And portraits have been painted, Just like the custom is among the superstars;</p> <p>Besides all these, Cartoons have been made Thrilling and humorous Broadcasted on TV.</p> <p>Well, after all these Indisputable And unbelievable success Arpagic, just as expected, Became pretty arrogant.</p> <p>It is not surprising at all: When he goes out for a walk Everyone on the street becomes excited And gather to see him;</p> <p>The windows are widely open, The children forget about homework, The branches bend over fence, There is an incredible crowd,</p> <p>The cars are forced To slow down, He is thrown glances at In a cattish way,</p> <p>He is given flowers, Bread and salt, Some letter In an envelope And everyone shouts „Arpagic!”</p> <p>He advances important and confused, Gives a piece of advice, listens to a vociferous protest (Like that of a clucking hen Against a hunting tomcat),</p> <p>He shares smiles, paw shakes, Sometimes a fine Or, rather Admonition And everyone is attentive And grateful.</p> <p>Moreover the fights cease (to see and think not) Between mongrel males and mongrel females! And (can you believe this?) I was told That a little mouse, Who was waiting to be grabbed By His Highness,</p> <p>Was quietly crying, And sobbing: „What an honor To be eaten by Him!”</p> <p>Given this enchanted moment I believe it is natural That Arpagic is ready to leap out of his fur And he finds himself as phenomenal.</p> <p>So I am intrigued, after all these, That he still responds to my call</p>
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<p>(Ofierindu-i, bineinteles, drept recunostinta, Un poem!).</p> <p>Probabil ca in firea Lui de celebritate Ajunsa la apogeu Mai razbate, Câteodata, Cu greu, Ca o erata, Amintirea Ca e personajul meu...</p>	<p>(Offering him a poem to express my gratitude, Of course!).</p> <p>Perhaps In his celebrity soul At its peak Breaks through, Sometimes, Hardly, Like an erratum, The flashback That he is my personage...</p> <p>[author's translation]</p>
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The main character was Arpagic, the tomcat, which Ana Blandiana turned into a satirical depiction of Ceausescu. The readership rapidly picked up the message and the common joke at the time was to call Ceausescu by the name of Arpagic. As the rumor spread, the book sale increased. The censorship decoded the message only after the publication and the book was withdrawn from bookstores in the middle of turmoil, known as *Arpagic scandal* – “Orders were given for her books to be withdrawn from libraries. The ban was accompanied by the cutting of the telephone line, the interception of her mail, and by a constant surveillance of her house by the Securitate until 22 December 1989.”²¹⁰ As Blandiana remembers, in the *Evenimentul Zilei* interview in July of 2014, it was the third time when she was banned from publication and “the incredible reason was the fact that in a children’s poetry book, I mocked Ceausescu by disguising him as Arpagic the tomcat.”

In summation, the fictional, nonfictional and poetic texts of opposition writers bore witness to a state-sponsored insidious terror that was otherwise hidden from the world. The irony was that during the 1970s and 1980s

²¹⁰ Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule*, (Iasi: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1999): 121-122

Ceausescu was often perceived in the West to be a less dangerous dictator than others in the Soviet bloc. Indeed, President Nixon met with him in 1969 when he paid an official visit to Romania and Ceausescu was received by President Carter in Washington in 1978. Without these critical works of writing, composed often at the risk of life for the author or his or her family, the history of the Ceausescu regime would have been lost forever.

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to show how literature as a form of cultural resistance in totalitarian Romania offered the opportunity of experiencing freedom under extreme conditions. This study looked at both the notion of resistance through literature and the totalitarian system that resistance was directed against.

During almost 45 years of communism in Romania, literary production was one of the fewest venues to experience and preserve freedom in a society that denied human rights and civil liberties. Although always changing and adapting to new situations created by the evolution of the communist society, literature remained a way to resist the Romanian repressive government. As Eugen Negrici emphasized, in communist Romania, literature of resistance became a response to totalitarian rule. “Nothing of what happens in the process of a literature developed under totalitarian government has a natural explanation. Directly or indirectly, everything is response, reaction, riposte, defensive, desperate or inventive retreat, stratagem of surviving.”²¹¹ As the discussion about resistance had been extrapolated to cultural levels, literature opposing Romanian totalitarianism waged an unarmed offensive against repression and total control.

²¹¹ Negrici, 11

Seen in this light, literature analyzed in this research incorporated a political component that distinguishes it from the Western assumption that literature is apolitical. As the Western democracies did not try to suppress civil liberties, literature was assumed as apolitical, naturally incorporating the freedom of thought and speech. In opposition, the Romanian writers found in literature a way of exercising their civil and political rights otherwise completely suppressed. The literature of resistance in Romania, during communist years, became a way of surviving within a system that was maintained through frightening and unimaginable forms of oppression and arbitrary and cruel exercise of power concentrated in the hands of a few.

As shown in the textual analysis of the diaries, journals, novels, poetry and even children's literature, the resistant texts were able to produce a discourse that opposed the official one. This discourse contradicted, directly denounced or ironically criticized a regime that was constantly preoccupied to maintain a total control and falsify history while striving to present a distorted reality to the international community.

Freedom from totalitarianism in Romania was regained through a bloody revolution in 1989, but the regime of total control was constructed in such a way that fewer and fewer believed that it will ever collapse. The force of the human spirit and constant longing for liberty translated into literature of resistance in many different ways as we have seen, but they were all driven by the same quest for freedom. As Segel noted, referring to the prison literature for instance, "now that communism has departed the stage of history in Eastern

Europe, this prison literature should be regarded as a living testimony the sometimes astonishing strength of the human spirit, the will to persevere in abysmal and extreme conditions, and the universal yearning for freedom.”²¹²

Some of these literary works, such as journals were individual experiences potentially awaking the collective consciousness and individuals’ desire of liberation; some others, such as Pacepa’s memoirs were directly challenging the system and undermining it. Shortly after Ceausescu’s death, the first issue of “*The Truth*” newspaper started publishing *Red Horizons*, acknowledging that “this book had “an indisputable role” in overthrowing Ceausescu’s dictatorship.”²¹³

Literature of resistance in totalitarian Romania also represents a chronicle of the communist era, which almost nobody believed it will eventually be brought to an end. It also offered to its authors and readership a thin margin of freedom experienced under extreme conditions; it certainly allowed a way of maintaining an *intimate liberty*. In a recent interview by Deutsche Welle, after winning the 2015 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding, Mircea Cartarescu, a well-known contemporary author, said that “writing is a way of preserving your inner freedom in a totalitarian regime.”²¹⁴

In spite of variety and genres, forms or style, the force behind resistant literature was always the desire for freedom. Referring to prison narratives,

²¹² Segel, *The Walls Behind the Curtain*, 9

²¹³ Forward to *Orizonturi Rosii*, 8

²¹⁴ Alexandra Scherle, “Cartarescu Wins Leipzig Book Award for ‘Universal’ Novel,” *Deutsche Welle*, March 11, 2015, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/cartarescu-wins-leipzig-book-award-for-universal-novel/a-18305806>

Harold Segel identifies the sources that inspired the authors: “the desire to reach out to others, to bear witness, to make known the outrageous assault on liberty and human dignity, the belittlement of the individual, and the monstrous inhumanity of the camp system that had been imposed on them. These prison texts by East European authors, whether produced during incarceration or subsequently, collectively represent one of the most important bodies of literature of the period.”²¹⁵

Literature, as a form of art resisting communist oppression in Romania, was one of the fewest outlets that allowed the Romanian people to experience freedom within a world that prohibited any rights and any civil manifestation of political independence. The political engagement of those who chose to write against the communist regime gave them and those who followed the message the sense that the intellectual and psychological survival is still possible in totalitarianism.

“Not all has been said... yet.

Finally, to write in protest.

Against absolute power.

Against thought control.

Against arbitrary detention.

Against detention as a means of doing away with freedom of thought.

Against the absolute power of the interrogator and the interrogations.

Against detention as an instrument of punishment prior to sentencing.

²¹⁵ Segel, *The Walls Behind the Curtain*, 9

Against torture.

Against total isolation.

To ask for men's justice for men.

To ask for men's pity for men.

I am still, forever, in the prison cell."²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Lena Constante, *The Silent Escape: Three Thousand Days in Romanian Prisons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 16

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