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The Romanian Intellectual, Christian Orthodoxy, and Identity in connection to Iron Guardism

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Abstract: *As the second part of a two part series, this article explores the confluence of Romanian intellectual culture and the rise of fascism in the interwar period, with a distinct concentration on the particularity of Romanian identity and its transformation amid the changing rhetoric of plurinationality. Ultimately, the process by which a concrete Romanian identity was formed within the rhetoric of intellectuals was the result of elements of differing views of nationality, the Romanian peasantry, and Christian Orthodoxy, all of which were salient elements of Romanian society during the rise of extremists groups such as the Iron Guard. In this second part, I explore the way that the Jewish population and Jewish identity in Romania was used by intellectuals to define Romanian identity by positing that in fact it was the complete opposite of 'Romanianism' as it was defined by the rhetoric of the intelligentsia, which manifested itself in the rise of Iron Guard. The ideals of 'race,' and 'ethnicity' were therefore paradoxes for many Romanian thinkers and writers.*

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Introduction

In my previous article "The Precarious Nature of Romanian Identity and Nationality: The Intellectuals' National Identification Process through Youth, Peasants, and Jews in the Interwar Period," I discussed the means by which Romanian identity was a complex mechanism within which Romanian intellectuals managed to formulate their own ideological underpinnings against the backdrop of an ever changing socio-political landscape in 1930s Romania.[1] This article will serve as a continuation of the main argument I put forward, that Romanian identity was inherently unique and used binary systems to promote, at times mythologized versions of its character through numerous publications and their authors. There was undeniably a link between the philosophical ideal of "totality," and the understanding of Christian Orthodoxy by Romanian intellectuals, which played a salient role in the numerous colourful configurations of a projected identity.[2]

The elevation of Jewish intellectuals in the interwar period, within the incessant and anti-semitic atmosphere produced a few individuals, such as Mihail Sebastian, who consistently debated their own identities as Jews or Romanians.[3] The particular case of Sebastian, however, is most

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[1] Milad Doroudian, "The Precarious Nature of Romanian Identity and Nationality: The Intellectuals' National Identification Process through Youth, Peasants, and Jews in the Interwar Period", in *Romanian Journal of History and International Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 2, Nov. 2016, pp. 114-144.

[2] Mihai Murariu, *Totality, Charisma, Authority: The Origins and Transformations of Totalist Movements,* Munster, Germany, Springer, 2016, p. 248.

[3] Leon Volovici, *Nationalist ideology and antisemitism: the case of Romanian intellectuals in the 1930's*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Pergamon Press, 1991, p. 73.

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interesting, mainly due to the fact that he was very much connected to Nae Ionescu, and other leading thinkers of the time.[4] Although throughout the 1930s he consistently promoted anti-liberal ideas, and even supported fascism as was the trend amid his generation, he kept a very prolific diary in which he noted his incessant humiliation at the hands of the others because of his Jewish origins.[5] The recently published *For Two Thousand Years* is a small compendium of some of the hundreds of his diary entries in the 1930s, which show the difficulty of being Jewish in Bucharest, yet it omits the rather paradoxical nature of his ideological thought.[6] He was a contributor to *Cuvântul* - a less extremist but still conservative publication where he, along with Mircea Eliade, wrote on the peculiarities of Romanian culture and tradition. In 1937, he is mentioned in a publication entitled *Lanuri*, where he was said to be a "great critic" of Romanian literature - as lot of his writing outside his plays was the critique of literature, with an emphasis on the spiritual aspects of literature.[7]

Sebastian was only one of dozens of important Jewish thinkers who were stuck in an identity crisis amid an increasingly intolerant government, and society. The works of those such as Avram Axelrad, Victor Rusu and many others usually dealt with the theme of Jewish identity and assimilation - yet what is interesting is not only the rejection of their ideas based on the fact that they were Jewish, but the intelligentsia, as those as

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[4] David Auburn, *The Journals of Mihail Sebastian,* Chicago, Dramatists Play Service, 2004, p. 11.
[5] *Ibidem*, p. 50-51.
[6] Mihail Sebastian, *For Two Thousand Years,* UK, Penguin, 2016, p. 1-2.
[7] ***, "Lanuri" 1937, no. 2, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, p. 69 [accessed March 27th, 2016].

Nae Ionescu, who consistently believed that their ideological presence undermined the solidification of Romanian identity in currents of thought.[8] In a way, the presence of Jewish writers, poets and playwrights, many of which were influenced by the undercurrents of Dadaism and liberalism presented a problem, one that was in complete opposition to Romania's spiritual character and anti-materialism.[9] It was not just the literary movement, where most Jews supported modernism, which presented a danger to Orthodoxism, but also the new forms of art that became preponderant at the time - such as the artistic circles of Tristan Tzara for instance. Despite these liberal elements however, Jews were still taking part in some right-wing ideological circles and strains of through until 1937 when such a thing became institutionally impossible. Both directly, yet also indirectly Jewish intellectuals posed a problem not just through their presence, but also their works on Romanian identity, which was increasingly becoming more connected to Orthodoxism on a cultural level.[10]

The nature of the left in Romania after the First World War, unlike other countries, did not include virulent anti-Semitism, neither in the few left-leaning intellectuals nor politicians, mainly due to the fact that most

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[8] Leon Volovici, "Romanian Literature", in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, New York, YIVO, 19 November 2010, p. 1 [accessed 15th April 2016].
[9] David Berry, *The Romanian Mass Media and Cultural Development,* Bodmin, Cornwall, Ashgate Publishing, 2004, pp. 8-9.
[10] Radu Cinopes, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania: A History of Extreme Politics From the Birth of the State to EU Accession,* London, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010, pp. 52-53.

Marxists were in fact Jewish or non-Romanian.[11] Socialism, or truly any variants of leftist doctrine was very much in the minority not only in the government, but also in the intellectual circles of universities, mainly due to the anti-Bolshevism that was rampant in the polity, but also due to the mass urbanization of minorities such as Jews, Hungarians and Germans in Romania.[12] Katherine Verdery infers that the Jews and peasants became central to the Romanian identity in the post-war period, which led, of course, to a dichotomy between the populations.[13] In essence, Jews were more prevalently active in Marxist movements due to their urban character, in contrast to Jews living in rural areas that were usually isolated and apolitical.[14] On the other hand, Romanian peasants and youth became more systematically involved in the populism exhibited by groups such as the Iron Guard. Marxist doctrines, although present in the works of those like Tudor Bugnariu, along with their personal and national "identity dilemmas", did not take centre stage in Romanian politics and society, as fervently as nationalism. [15]

The issue of class however is a crucial one, especially in regards to the intelligentsia which was preponderantly identified with the middle, or

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[11] Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930,* Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2000, pp. 248-252.
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 256.
[13] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania,* Berkley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 21 and 31.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 34.
[15] Ștefan Bosomitu, *Becoming in the Age of Proletariat. The Identity Dilemmas of a Communist Intellectual Throughout Autobiographical Texts,* Case Study: T. Bugnariu, in *History of Communism in Europe* 5:17-35, Bucharest, Zeta Books, 2014, pp. 17-18.

"entrepreneurial" class, in contrast to the largely non-proletariat populace of the country.[16] What is intriguing is the fact some elements of the left such as the movement known as *Poporanism*, advocated populist ideals in the name of the 'peasant' - not in traditionalist Marxist models, but in the same way that the right-wing promoted Romanian culture.[17] The synthesis of class, and right-wing principles upheld by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, is a telling example of the traditionally nationalist quality of all political movements regardless of their positions on the political and ideological spectrum.[18]

Extremism and 'Totality' Materialized

In the case of Romania, there is no need to find the esoteric and arguable connections between the extremist ideas of intellectuals and those populist leaders through long winded analyses of each other's writings, as they were both very much intersected especially in the 1930s.[19] Between 1932 – 1934, many intellectuals joined the Legion of the Archangel - the most prominent members being Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu.[20] Although historians have studied these relationships, the way that they

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[16] Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania,* Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010, p. 125.
[17] Ana Maria Dobre, Roman Coman. *România şi integrarea europeană,* Bucharest, Institutul European, 2005, p. 66.
[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 71-72.
[19] Radu Ioanid. *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*, Bucharest, East European Monographs, 1990, p. 98 and 132.
[20] Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2015, p. 104 and 109.

affected the general movement and the rise of right-wing extremism as a whole, it is beneficial to understand how those such as Codreanu and the thousands of "young intellectuals," as they were called, viewed Romanian identity and to what extent did those views which were impacted on by past intellectuals of the old and new guards precipitated the nature of their anti-Semitism and Orthodoxism.[21] It is without a doubt a fact that the Iron Guard, also known as the 'Legion,' was the materialization of all the ideological tenets of past intellectuals, yet the question remains whether their movement was a reaction to the realization of a non-solidified Romanian identity and perhaps their own answer to it as well?

The link between the Iron Guard's ideological framework, Orthodoxism, and the populist idealizations of the Romanian peasant are salient in understanding the motivations of the movement and, of course, Codreanu, who, although, was not in any terms really an intellectual, his relationships with those such A.C. Cuza, and Nae Ionescu placed him in the midst of the exchange of ideas - many of which he took as early as 1927 and simplified them through propagandistic mechanism in order to propagate his own pseudo-nationalist manifesto.[22] The interesting aspect however, was that, although influenced to a great extent, he, perhaps more than any other prominent individual in interwar Romania, took on the ideological concept of 'totality' and applied it from his cult of personality to the very aesthetics of his character. The Sword of the Archangel, as it was

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[21] Irina Livezeanu. *op cit*., p. 277.
[22] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *For My Legionaries,* London, Black House Publishing, 2015, p. 29.

sometimes called, propagated the myth of "the new man", which went beyond even the identity of the Romanian at times, which implied a truly spiritual 'form' based in Christian Orthodoxy, but also found in the purity of the racial body.[23] Even here, however, Codreanu lacked originality, as his conceptions of the Romanian peasant's centrality could easily be identified to those along the lines of Iorga. It is no mistake that scholarship has always referred to his movement as a 'fascist-type' group, rather than blatantly fascist, due to the odd mystical character and, at times, anti-rational and contradictory precepts of Iron Guardism.[24] A great deal of the educated youth amid its ranks subscribed to the ideas of *Gândirism* and *Trăirism* - taking from them not only conceptual models, but even existential answers to the "Romanian" question.[25]

The Iron Guard, unlike the Nazi Party, the fascists in Italy or other right-wing groups in Europe, was very much concerned with the existential crisis of Romanian existence, and its pseudo-intellectual elements consistently propagated that 'totality' - dogmatism and all-encompassing faith - were the answers to all of the national problems. In one of its many hymns, the "call to death" for purification was sung as an honourable practice, also seen through the numerous cult-like gatherings symbolized by make-shift crucifixions and religious imagery.[26] The movement was defined

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[23] Radu Ioanid. *op cit*., p. 81.
[24] Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties,* Boulder, Colorado East European Monographs, 1999, p. 265.
[25] Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2015, p. 139.
[26] Diana Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union,* New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016. p. 74.

by religious rebirth and "regeneration", which advocated not a return to Orthodoxism, but a new type of religious affinity that played a role in every aspects of one's life.[27] Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade, who both partook in Legionary organizations and even praised the movement, would later denounce or even hide their association, yet at the time for many intellectuals such as themselves the movement provided an 'answer' to their philosophical and ideological problems. In other words, it was the material manifestation of their philosophies, and as what they saw the answer to ever present dilemma of Romanian nationality.

The success that Codreanu enjoyed until his assassination in the late 1930s, however, lay in his ability to amass and influence the youth of the Romanian nation, where most of his targeted recruiting grounds were university campuses.[28] The reason for this is because university students were usually introduced, mildly, to the ideas of Romanian nationalism, Orthodoxism, and even the long standing anti-Semitism, which were propagated in the lecture halls by those such as A.C. Cuza. In 1927, after the first outburst of violence in places such as Oradea and Iasi organized by Codreanu on university campuses, students usually took expeditions to the countryside in order to try and spread the message of Iron Guardism to the ill-educated peasants, which usually took easily to the religiosity of

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[27] Paul A. Shapiro, "Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and The Romanian Orthodox Church", in *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007, p. 154.
[28] ***, *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, November 2004, USHMM, p. 31.

Legionary Youth.[29] In this case we see the Romanian 'youth' and the 'peasant' brought together by their 'old religion.' John Lampe and Mark Mazower attribute the rise of Codreanu as a charismatic leader to the "identity vacuum" present in Romanian society, at the time brought on by the hardships of the unification of all three principalities and adjacent territories - yet they fail to look at the importance of the Romanian intellectual in regards to this "vacuum."[30] Relevant example would be the salient intersections between the long evolution of ideologically-defined Romanian identity and its reality, in regards to how it was manifested in the minds of the right-wing and even the moderately conservative.

In the end, it was not the Iron Guard that won political power in Romania, but rather the conservative nationalist forces of those such as Ion Antonescu and Mihai Antonescu. The Iron Guard posed a danger not only to Hitler's objective in Romania, but also to the nation's cultural and nationalist structures were too extreme, which of course led not only to the rejection of Codreanu, but also his successor Horia Sima.[31] As this 'battle' was taking place in the intelligentsia and on the political stage in regards to Romanian identification in the 1930s, the realities of what Irina Livezeanu termed "cultural politics" in Romania were shaping the true nature of the dictatorship that would take hold of the nation in 1940.[32] The historical and

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[29] Diana Dumitru, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
[30] John Lampe, Mark Mazower, *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe,* Budapest, New York, Central European University Press, 2004, p. 31.
[31] Jean Ancel, *The History of The Holocaust in Romania,* Jerusalem, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, pp. 42-44.
[32] Irina Livezeanu, *op. cit.,* p. 14.

political contexts of the interwar period in which individuals sought to define Romanian identity are just as salient in the way that both the most extreme and moderate nationalists responded to this "anxiety."[33]

As aforementioned, the inclusion of Transylvania after the Alba Iulia proclamation in 1918 opened up a new problem both for the Romanian polity and intellectual. The inclusion of vast numbers of minorities brought into question Romanian identity, in tandem with the problematic nature of allowing for certain rights. It is in this context, Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic promoted the synthesis of Orthodoxy and race, which even extended to the other parts of society such as medicine - as made evident by Iuliu Moldovan categorization of the biopolitical state.[34] Although there are no direct links between the eugenics movement in Romania, as argued by Maria Bucur, and the extreme right, both sought to provide an answer to the way that Romanians categorized themselves.[35] A great deal many thinkers, mostly doctors, who were proponents of eugenics in Romania, sought to maintain the "authentic" character of the Romanian body, both in terms of its racial but also cultural nature.[36] Even in the sciences, therefore, the traditionalism that was so characteristic at the time found its way in the discourse of doctors. Bucur argues that, unlike other eugenics movements in other parts of the world, the fascination that doctors held with race and body did not lie solely in preservation, but also in the definition of

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[33] Radu Cinopes, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
[34] Maria Bucur, *op cit.,* p. 61.
[35] *Ibidem*, pp. 65-68 and 160.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 69.

Romanian racial and physical attributes.[37] In other words, one of their objectives was to try and find out what was unique about the Romanian body, not so different from how for instance Vulcănescu tried to define the Romanian mind, in his *The Romanian Dimension of Existence*.[38] Even outside literary and scientific circles, this fascination with identification was present, as the 'Romanian's' state of being was in constant analysis.

New Interpretation of Anti-Semitism and Orthodox Mysticism

The obsession of both Romanian intellectuals and society with identity, in the precarious interwar period, placed the 'Jew' as the necessary antipode in the process. In other words: one of the elements which were used as a contradiction to Romanian traditionalism and its 'spirit.'[39] In reality, of course, Jews, especially in Bucharest and other urban centres were very much assimilated and part of society despite their historic inclusion.[40] What I am referring to in this context is the conceptual understanding of Jewry and Judaism as abstraction and the opposite of Romanianism. The construction of this dichotomy was prevalent, especially in the works of those such as Nichifor Crainic, which consistently referred to Jews as "materialistic" and "feminine."[41] Crainic, in this particular article

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[37] *Ibidem*. pp. 75 and 145.
[38] Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness,* Budapest*,* Central University Press, 2001. p. 147.
[39] Nicolae Iorga, "Spiritul Istoric", in *Cuget Clar* (33-36), p. 497.
[40] Jean Ancel, *op cit.,* pp. 22-23.
[41] ***, "Sărăcia spirituală a evreilor" in *Gândirea*, no. 10, 1937, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, pp. 1-2.

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in Gândirea, does not attribute Otto Weininger, nor is there any evidence throughout Crainic's work that alludes to him; these ideas are very much the same as those in *Sex and Character*.[42] Although there are no direct links, the same ideals found in Weininger seemed to reverberate through the works of writers such as Crainic. The point remains that the 'Jew' perhaps played a far more substantial role as an element of self-identification - thus pushing away from Jewry as an abstraction, while also using it as something to direct the 'anxiety' found in the precarious nature of the process. This of course is merely one complexity that can only be attributed to the intellectual milieu, but plays an important role to explaining the many facets of the virulent anti-Semitism in Romania as even remarked upon by Hannah Arendt.[43]

This one factor, however, is merely an explanatory model that infuses the rhetoric of thinkers with the national atmosphere of the nation and should be used as a part of understanding the relationship between nationalism and anti-Semitism. The traditional understanding of anti-Jewish sentiments and violence in Romania, as those put forward by Ryan D. King and William I Brustein, also remain exceptionally salient - namely the fact that the large population of Jews, as well as the economic deterioration of the country led to increased anti-Semitic actions.[44] In this case study which

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[42] Otto Weininger. *Sex and Character*, London, William Heinemann, 1906, pp. 184-185.
[43] William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania,* Volume 193, Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1991, p. 2.
[44] William Brunstein and Ryan King, "Anti-Semitism as a Response to Perceived Jewish Power: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust", in *Social Forces*, Vol. 83, no. 2, Dec. 2004, p. 704.

was compared to Bulgaria, I am inclined to argue that the identity crisis in Romania was more of a unique nature, as a result of the inclusion of so many new minorities in Transylvania and Bessarabia after the First World War - while in Bulgaria anti-Ottomanism seemed to be more at the forefront of public rhetoric. The anti-Masonry that also became prevalent in Romania in the 1930s had the same patterns of exclusions, but also attributes and projections of opposition - in many cases Judaism and Freemasonry were lumped together as the same elements.[45] It is also for this reason why Orthodoxy, in terms of religiosity became such an important characteristic of self-identification.

The mystical elements of Christian Orthodoxy that can be traced to those such as A.C. Cuza all the way to Antonescu himself, who swore his allegiance to the Romanian people in a church in 1941 and proclaimed a "sacred war" on Bolshevism, is telling of its importance to Romanians in the time period.[46] Nicolae Iorga was right when he proclaimed the unbreakable bond between the Romanian spirit and the Orthodox Church - practiced in its purest form by the peasant.[47] Not so different from how Greeks identified themselves through their religion in their quest for independence and national consolidation, the Romanians also found it difficult to understand themselves as anything but Orthodox Christians. In

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[45] Roland Clark, "Anti-Masonry as political protests: fascist and Freemasons in interwar Romania", in *Patterns of Prejudice,* Volume 46, 2012, pp. 41-42.
[46] Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-century Romania,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 8.
[47] William Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalist Thought of Nicolae Iorga,* Boulder and New York, East European Quarterly, 1973, pp. 58-61.

fact, the fabrication of historic memory, in which Nicolae Iorga is included, made connections between the Byzantine past and the present - where 'Latinity' was not only a racial component but a spiritual one.[48] It seems, however, that this played a substantial part in opposing what was considered its Jewish 'opposite.' On one hand, the Jewish component was used in order to define Romanianism, while Orthodoxy was used to concretize it fully - as, after centuries of division, the precarious nature of Romanian identity could only, in the eyes of many intellectuals, be identified through Christian Orthodoxy.

The terse overview provided, as well as the basic framework in regards to the identification process, is only a small step to understanding the sheer complexity of Romanian 'thought' that spearheaded many of the cultural and social bearings at the time. It is essential to remember that the socio-political atmosphere was excessively turbulent between 1927 and 1940, when the increase in nationalist parties and their power in government made it obvious that the tendency of Romanian politics was to be generally far more right-wing. The power of the LANC in the late 1920s and Codreanu's split from its main body to create the Legion of The Archangel Michael came about in stormy period. The excessive popularity of Codreanu and the Iron Guard was perhaps what has been attributed for Antonescu's rise during his National Legionary State with Horia Sima, and his pragmatic yet also opportunistic use of Hitler's power in Europe to

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[48] Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga: A Biography,* Bucharest, Centre for Romanian Studies, 1998. p. 92.

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become sole dictator in 1941.[49] Amid the political realities during this period, however, there is validity to understanding the way that the men of letters responded to these national changes, as they were influential amid the elite.

The historical, yet also philosophical model of 'totality', as argued by Martin Jay, but also based on the formulations of Hegel, are an important consideration to understanding the example of the Romanian intelligentsia.[50] The need to encompass a 'black' and 'white' binary of the world - existentialist or not - amid the intellectuals of the period, as to be able to identify the characteristics of Romanian identity remains salient. In other words, the fragile character, as Sorin Mitu calls it, of Romanians at the time, seems to have been an important reason as to why the totality of Orthodoxy, in the cases of Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic came about.[51] In the case of Iorga and Xenopol, their views on Romanian culture, encompassed some elements of 'totality,' yet nowhere to the same extent.

The oversimplifications of those such as Codreanu and other popular pseudo-intellectual agitators perceived the 'peasant' attribute of the Romanian 'spirit' as the ideal method of existence.[52] It must be said that when studying the historical background of the right-wing in Romania, it is necessary to also understand the existential crisis that was occurring at the

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[49] Jean Ancel, *op. cit,* p.173.
[50] Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p. 16.
[51] Sorin Mitu, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania,* Budapest, Central European University Press, 2001, pp. 24-26.
[52] Leon Volovici, *op. cit.,* p. 69.

time - the one which easily translated to Legionary youth taking trips around the rural parts of the country where peasants lived to sing religious and patriotic hymns in their honour.[53] The largely illiterate masses of Romania responded solely to their agrarian problems, always in relation to the Orthodox Church - issues which were pivotal in the discourses of writers that sought to project and represent the Romanian "soul."

The historiography that has dealt with nationalism and anti-Semitism in interwar Romania in the last few decades has made great leaps in trying to frame the salient relations between intellectuals and the realities on the ground. Namely, Volovici (1991), Ornea (1999) and Ioanid (1990) have shown intrinsic associations both in the literature of Romanian thinkers and the political trends that were taking over the nation, yet they do not analyze the importance of Romanian identity in this precarious period in relation to the rise of xenophobia in depth. Although Bucur mentions that within the medical community the question of identity was very much at the core of the rise of eugenics in the 1930s, she does not associate the same concept to the intellectual class.[54] This framework however has the potential to add another layer of complexity, but also to illuminate the understanding of the rise of nationalism, conservatism, fascism, and anti-Semitism in Romania, which have all been dubbed as "unique" by historians.[55] With this in mind, it is also important to place the Jewish community at the time within this narrative, as to understand not only the

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[53] Diana Dumitru, *op cit.,* p. 74.
[54] Maria Bucur *op cit.,* pp. 65-68.
[55] William Oldson, *op cit.,* p. 109.

Romanian reaction to the agitations of the time, but that of the Jews as well
- however such a consideration is beyond the scope of this article.

The problematic nature of trying to discern links between thinkers,
intellectuals, and scholars through their works, and their lives, and attribute
whether that was the general consensus amid society at large is, without a
doubt, vast. In Romania, however, these links were obvious by the fact that
most of these thinkers either borrowed or were influenced by others, but
also the fact that they were in constant communication through numerous
literary magazines. Whether this was the major consensus can be answered
by the positive reactions of the populace to the Iron Guard and Codreanu,
who simplified these notions, to accommodate the religious and provincial
quality of Romanian society. Anti-Semitism was so accepted and open, that
in most cases there is no need to dig deep in the interpretive minutiae of
literature and scholarship - but the task remains to try to identify its innate
uniqueness which lay in its potency. It was a factor which undoubtedly lay
in the national preoccupation with identity, which is still very much alive to
this day.

In an October 1936 issue of *Gândirea*, Nichifor Crainic published
an article entitled "Spirituality and Romaniaism", in which he explains that
being Romanian is in fact a spiritual state of existence.[56] Although only one
example, the thousands like it produced by the literary class is indicative of
the notion of "completeness" that they sought after. It is not, however, the
case that this was the sole reason for the virulent anti-Semitism during the

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[56] ***, "Spiritualitate și Romanism", in *Gândirea*. no. 8, Oct. 1936, Biblioteca
Transilvania, p. 377.

1930s, as I am inclined to argue that the socio-political factors as expressed by those such as Brustein were just as salient. Yet there is an interesting correlation to the process of national identification which merits further exploration. Namely, the fact that scholars have attributed the origins of anti-Semitism to the "rich cultural traditions that accompanied the unification of the principalities" is in itself a simplification, as it might have been truly in the creation of rich cultural traditions, in order to consolidate an identity.[57] Although not connected in totality to the rise of anti-Semitism and all other complexities put aside, the only other nations in Europe which experienced such an extreme form of fascism in the 1930s were ones which went through national unification in the 19th century, such as Italy and Germany. Of course the nature of the anti-Semitism in each polity was very much based own specificities. This is a mere simplification, but it is interesting to find out in greater depth how a nation's fascination with its own identity affects its rationalization of exclusion, even if only conceptually.

In the case of Romania, generations of intellectuals in the country's turbulent inter-war period, as well as popular and literary culture, were fascinated with trying to define not just their nationality, but also their national identity. The 'Jewish Question' was therefore, at least in the hyperbole of intellectuals, connected to the Romanian one. With this in mind, as scholarship has made progress on trying to discern the severity of

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[57] ***, "Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania", 2004, USSHM, p. 2.

Romanian anti-Semitism, the task now lies in understanding its reciprocity to Romanian identity.

Extremism and 'Totality' at the core of Identity

There is a great deal of misunderstanding when it comes to the rise of ideological extremism amid Romanian intellectual circle - the cogs of rightist thought were already perplexingly present amid Romanian academia, but more so amid the fringe writers and professors that made up the *nomenklatura* of small intellectual groups.[58] Still their connections were not only found amid relationships, but also in the intertwining of ideology. The fascination with fascism, and more precisely the Iron Guard, by some such as Mircea Eliade, albeit perplexing, was in fact rooted in the sense of 'totality' that the Iron Guard provided at a pure ideological level.[59]

As aforementioned, the Iron Guard was not a direct materialization of extremism but rather the result of different mechanizations of intellectual culture present in Bucharest and Iasi. In the long memories of Michael Sturdza, the former foreign minister of Romania, there is an interesting appreciation for the rise of the Iron Guard, not as a political necessity, but rather as an ideological one - the culmination of the total character of the

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[58] Paul Hiemstra, *Alexandru D. Xenopol and the Development of Romanian Historiography,* New York, Routledge, 14 April 2016, pp. 5-6.
[59] Horst Junginger, *The Study of Religion Under the Impact of Fascism,* Boston, BRILL, 2008, p. 35.

Romanian body politic.[60] In here lies a small window in the through processes of politicians that took hold of Romania's somewhat backward political systems.[61] Yet it is only telling that Prince Michael Sturdza, despite his subtle appreciation, chose to nickname the book that would hold his memoirs *The Suicide of Europe.*

The Romanian character and its confluence with the people's 'soul', as argued by Codreanu, was inherently the result of, paradoxically, both the love of European values but also their repudiation.[62] The Romanian intellectuals embraced the "virtues" of fascism, as they viewed them, in order to create, or better said, consolidate a rather frail identity during a European era espoused in national significance. Therefore, for many such as Codreanu, it was not solely 'blood' and 'land' that defined and unity of the Romanian people, but in his view their spirits and their affinity to Christian Orthodoxy. It is mainly for this reason why Nichifor Crainic's *Ethnocracy* although argued for the creation of a 'pure-breed' Romanian, also argued that blood was nothing without the Romanian spirit.[63] The definite paradox of Romanian identity, as perceived by leading intellectuals was that it was both rooted in ethnicity, but not necessarily – which, of course, was a testament to thousands of years of occupations from the Roman settlement of Dacia, to the Slavic incursions, to the Ottoman occupations. The multi-varied and plurinational character of the Romanian people, therefore,

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[60] Michael Sturdza, *The suicide of Europe: memoirs of Prince Michel Sturdza,* Western Islands Publishing House, 1968, p. 36.
[61] *Ibidem*, p. 36.
[62] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[63] *Ibidem*, p. 272.

revealed itself even in the mindset of radical fascists such as Codreanu, with a tinge of pragmatism, which differentiated its insecure notion of "totality" both in physical manifestation, and as a pure Hegelian historical concept.[64] This same characteristics can be found from "Neamul Românesc", the early nationalist pamphlet published by Nicolae Iorga, to the early published articles on eugenics in academic circles of the 1930s.[65] In other words, a varied and irregular view of identity, that was not so much rooted in race, as in the interconnected nature of 'blood' and 'spirit,' as put forth by numerous writers such as Nichifor Crainic and even Mircea Eliade.

The ultimate significance of this lies in the fact that identity, which was moulded by the characteristics of the Romanian peasantry, youth and Jewry, as argued in my previous article, was also found in a dichotomy of paradoxes, as most of Romanian history is, in which the intellectual culture of the 1930s grappled to a terrifying level with its complexity.[66] The best examples being the work of those such as Emil Cioran, who flip-flopped from flirting with fascism to at times promoting liberalism.[67] The Romanian intellectual, therefore, as the most distinct generalization, was stuck in contending with the paradox of 'Romanianism', as was the concept itself.

In a small opinion article in the famous "Cuvântul" (The Word) newspaper, entitled "Scrisoarea Despre Un Alt Paris" (A letter about

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[64] Martin Jay. *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[65] ***, "Cum se apără o țară", in *Neamul Românesc*. Year 11, N-I 43, 2 November 1911.
[66] Milad Doroudian. *op. cit.*, p. 114-115.
[67] Emil Cioran, *The Romanian Transfiguration*, Bucharest, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, p. 26; Emil Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, New York, Skyhorse Publishing, 2012, p. 170; and Emil Cioran. "Constiința politică a studenţimii", in *Vremea*, no. 463, 15 Nov, 1936 [accessed March 3, 2016].

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another Paris), published in 1930, Mihail Sebastian wrote about the beauty of Parisian architecture.[68] Yet within this seemingly innocuous article, you can see at the most base level, his reiteration of the importance of identity, even if not his own. The same can be seen in the numerous publication, from left wing to right wing newspapers, to literary periodicals, and even simple political pamphlets. Only three years later, as the irredentist fascist movements of Europe were taking over, especially after the rise of Hitler to the chancellorship, a small article entitled "Fascismul" (Fascism) was published in the "Cultul Patriei" (Cult of the Nation) newspaper by Nicolae Bălănescu.[69] In it, one can see a fairly simplistic explanation of the main tenets of fascism, but interestingly Bălănescu introduces the concept of identity and its connections to the violent and 'adventurous' nature of fascism.[70] Albeit these are only a few examples, they are not singular, but can be found in the rhetoric of the intellectual class during the period. It is no mistake that next to that article, a piece titled "Nationalism Românesc" (Romanian Nationalism) was printed to fit the right-wing rhetoric of the publication, and the general trend of rhetoric of intellectuals in the pre-Second World War period.[71]

All of the paradoxes which I have shed some light on this article are meant to play a part in the explanation of why Romanian fascism, both at the political and social level in Romanian society, was in fact statist, as

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[68] Mihail Sebastian, "Scrisoarea Despre Un Alt Paris" in *Cuvântul*, Bucharest, 10 April 1930.
[69] Nicolae Bălănescu, "Fascismul" in *Cultul Patriei*, Bucharest, 23d May 1933.
[70] *Ibidem*, p. 1.
[71] G. Mărculescu, "Naționalism Românesc" in *Cultul Patriei*, Bucharest, 23d May 1933.

described by Dylan Riley, rather than civic or invariably collectivist as in Italy and Spain.[72] What is meant by this is that Romania's government, at least the Liberal Party, was more adamantly closer in its framework to the National Socialism of Germany - a reason why perhaps Antonescu, although for pragmatic reasons, became such a close ally of Hitler.[73] A part of this was rooted in the Romanian intellectual class, which was made up of Romanians, yet some Jews as well. There is a striking resemblance to the way that Japanese fascism manifested itself, namely the Iron Guard represented the forces of fascism from the bottom up, while Antonescu's statist fascism, from the top-down took control and squashed its opposition.[74] Yet such a critical comparison is beyond the scope of this article.

Conclusion

Over the course of the 1930s, Romania's intellectual class began to move away from the idea of liberal nationalism as espoused by the old guard - namely Nicolae Iorga - to a paradoxical understanding of fascism and extremism. One which became so radical in its physical manifestation of the Iron Guard, that Adolf Hitler and his German aides in Bucharest had to put a stop to the movement for fear of being unable to control the

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[72] Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania 1870-1945,* Baltimore, JHU Press, 2010, p. 20.
[73] *Ibidem*, p. 20.
[74] Alan Tansman, *The Culture of Japanese Fascism,* Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 37.

Romanian government under Antonescu and have access to the Ploiesti oil fields and to the one million men which would later participate in the eastern front.[75] Invariably, that radicalism most likely stemmed from the peculiar nature by which Romanian intellectuals morphed Christian Orthodoxy into an arbiter of Romanianism, coupled with an odd view of ethnicity. The conceptual framework of "totality" saw a salient shift from old 19th century styled nationalism to the energetic promises of fascism in the 1930s, styled in a Romanian fashion.

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[75] Robert Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond,* Random House Publishing Group, 9 February 2016, p. 134.

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