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**CULTURAL DISCOURSES IN CEAUȘIST
ROMANIA: THE HERO-MIRROR
MECHANISM**

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Cultural discourses in Ceaușist Romania: The Hero-Mirror Mechanism

This thesis is concerned with main cultural discourses of the second phase of Communism in Romania (1964-1989), period largely identical with that of Ceaușescu's rule. A secondary aim of the thesis is to look at the post-1989 continuations of these publicly influential discourses with the aim of understanding how the educational system (HE, in particular) is positioned in relation to the cultural domain. With regard to the Communist period, the main assertion of the thesis is that analysis of these discourses reveals an underlying cultural mechanism equivalent with a central mode of governance employed by the Communist party. According to this assertion, the mission of this cultural mechanism, with origins in Lenin's drastic distinction between the party and the proletariat and in the idea that the party must bestow consciousness on the proletariat, is to create and regulate positive avatars (heroes imbued with the best of humanity) for each social category so as to fulfill and safeguard the aims of the Party. For this reason, this device has been entitled the hero-mirror mechanism. The device has also been linked with religion and theology. This perspective has found that the mirror-mechanism corresponds to the notion of "imago Dei," and its axes to the notions of "kenosis" and "imitatio Dei." The assessment of these cultural discourses via the mirror-mechanism results in three dimensions of research, each with its own universes of investigation, and each with its own findings. In the first dimension, the mirror-mechanism deals with discourses as identity, and thus with the deconstruction of Romanian identity. If, as observed, the mirror-mechanism receives its first major blow in the 1980s and begins to crumble after 1989, what has replaced it since and with what implications for Romanian identity? The second dimension views the same discourses as mainly intellectual. Here, the notion of 'inner utopia' is highlighted as a dominant and recurring theme, and, therefore, as possibly the dominant feature of the Romanian cultural/political scene during and after Communism. If, because of the notion of 'inner utopia,' 'true education' is viewed as lying outside the provinces of formal institutions, what then is the educational role ascribed to the public space in relation to the HE system? Finally, the third dimension assesses these discourses in terms of their claims for anti-Communist resistance while providing a typology for elucidating such claims.

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In memory of the scholar that would have been Daniela Pălășan.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Almost every major Romanian intellectual has remarked the literary-centeredness of Romanian culture (Patapievici 2007¹, pp.95, 182-183; Negrici 2008, pp.27-28; Buduca 2004; Muşina 2006, pp.201-205; Flonta 2010, p.106; Tănăsoiu 2004, p.94; Cernat 2010v; Lefter 2012, p.203) although no one has attempted to explain it. In a nation which originated and developed as a modern state through the direct efforts of intellectual elites (Matei 2004), in which literature has been the only discipline to parallel (and in a close embrace) the development of the nation (to the extent that literary/cultural currents had always acted as social-political movements and sometimes even as the government, at least before being sent in the direction of the “autonomy of the aesthetic” by Communism), and also, the only scholarly field elevated to the rank of a cult during Communism (Negrici 2008, pp.28-31), this seems somewhat justified. Does this mean, however, that this thesis, through its scope and character, has fallen victim to this noble but outdated tradition? Is the author, in other words, another Eastern-European subject writing, as it can happen, primarily from a concern with self-identity? In other words, did the author just realize that he had been ‘inhabited’ by the same notion of ‘inner utopia’ highlighted throughout his own thesis (see end of the “Solar Lyricism” chapter), particularly in relation to Communism, as the dominant feature of the Romanian cultural/political scene? That he is rehearsing the same type of scholarship with the ‘encyclopedic’ intellectuals under scrutiny in his study? While the author is aware of him being affected by the notion of ‘inner utopia’ by virtue of his

¹ Patapievici (2007) attributes this phenomenon to the development of Romanian culture as predominantly a “general culture,” but he does not actually investigate literary-centeredness as such, being in fact more concerned with the discipline of philosophy and the issue of other underdeveloped specializations.

cultural belonging, this is not more than the usual, and as such, not something that has essentially shaped this project. Firstly, that the author has had to exit the comfort of his discipline and venture outside his normal area of research already suggests that a certain distortion might have occurred in terms of his methodology. Secondly, this thesis is certainly concerned with synthesis and integration, probably much beyond the usually expected level, but this has been caused, both as a challenge, and as an opportunity, by the state of current research in social sciences on the topic of Romania. Thirdly, what might look as scholarship at “the School of the ‘generalist’ genius” (Matei 2010, pp.28, 35) stems in reality from a comparative methodology which combines hermeneutics with Foucault, archetypal criticism, and the history of ideas in specific ways and in which narrative is both unified and polycentric (these methodologies and the manner of their use have been delineated in the ‘Methodology’ chapter). This project started with an educational vision ascertaining that the role of an educational system must be derived from the needs of society, particularly when that society is experiencing a very turbulent transition. Initially, lack of meaningful or coherent data about the educational system or about the needs of society resulted in an alternative focus on policy discourses about the meaning of transition. At this level, however, the dominant but incipient attempt to organize research and policy around a single, more fetishized than understood, radical neoliberal agenda, together with the realization that Romanian intellectuals were approaching issues of modernization primarily from within a literary-centric perspective, permanently shifted the focus onto the realm of cultural discourses. Thus, the orientation of the thesis has been conditioned by the literary-centeredness of Romanian culture, but this has been an external imposition and not an internal aspiration (this problematic has received detailed treatment in the ‘Literature Review’ chapter).

At the level of cultural discourses, however, the author has met with excessive fragmentation, with a cultural debate (polemic, in fact) expressed not in research but in journalistic form, through essays and personal cogitations located in cultural magazines and blogs, and, generally, through an encyclopedic (not specialized) discourse doubling a public-intellectual performance. As for the more serious research being carried out, at this stage, this was also fragmentary, as disciplines themselves were caught up in the process of transition. Trapped between an uncertain, inchoate and pre-paradigmatic character and the need to catch up with the West, and lacking institutional capacity, these disciplines also tended to accept and promote the neo-liberal models of transition without developing alternative paradigms. With key exceptions, the result has been either research literature that aims to bring the field up to date with its Western counterpart, or a generalist/theoretical essay-like type of literature (the essay and writing in cultural magazines still remains the preferred mode of writing for many of the important Romanian intellectuals), or research that is empiricist and/or based on a neo-liberal model. This picture has changed much since this project has started, but the issue of how these disciplines will reconstitute a lost, missing, incipient or backward tradition of research, and one that is more diverse in its paradigms and also up to date, is very much on the table. For such reasons, this thesis has been forced by the material at its disposal to be concerned with issues of synthesis and integration. This has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, such a vast attempt at integration of diverse research is somewhat unique and could have some added value. On the other, it is a strange animal amidst the other, more specialized research creatures and, with a strong wave of archival research beginning to replace the dominance of literary-centeredness and the fragmentation of research, there is hope that this project will become obsolete in the not

so distant future. In fact, where once there have been few renowned academics and several core readings, now there are countless academics dispersed globally, emerging sub-disciplines², and a huge array of publications of all sorts, for all of which the disciplines themselves cannot yet account. Topics for PhDs have also become narrower, as more and more literature on the same theme has begun to emerge.³ In my estimation, the explosion of knowledge in different areas relating to Romania has increased so much recently that it is hard to image a research project such as this could still be attempted in the future inductively. In this sense, this project constitutes an occasion that was not to be lost. What then is the thesis about, what are its hypotheses and findings, and which methodology supports them? Moreover, how are these concerns expressed at the level of structure? In short, the thesis is about cultural discourses. At this level, one aim of the thesis is to look at the cultural domain with the aim of understanding how the educational system (HE, in particular) is embedded in it (or not). However, these cultural discourses also are dominant intellectual discourses that have had a defining impact on individual and collective identity. At this level, also primarily educational, these identity discourses can be compared with garments that everyone in Romania has had to wear at some point in time, and to which many have remained particularly attached. In themselves, these discourses are ‘horizons’ (see Gadamer’s use of the term from Husserl, in Thiselton 2009, pp.219-220), which both limit and make possible, someone’s views, thoughts and actions. Understanding them, however, is not an

² Such as that of transitional justice in post-communist Romania, reflected in the writings of Lavinia Stan, Raluca Ursachi, Raluca Grosescu and Katherine Verdery, particularly from 2009 onwards.

³ A good example here can be given from the field of literary studies in relation to the G80. Studies that were once concerned with the entire generation or its paradigm/s (early 2000s) have gradually made way for monographs (mostly PhD dissertations) centered on a single author (since around 2007 until now), while recently the focus has shifted more in depth to more specific thematic content from the works of the same author. That this has been the case with the prose of Mircea Nedelciu is documented in the PhD thesis of Hărșan (2013, pp.7-8).

aesthetical game, but a manner of elucidating to what extent these ‘horizons’ have also acted as modes of subjectification controlled or directed by the Communist party (or, on the contrary, as forms of resistance).

Here the main assertion or hypothesis (and research question) of the thesis has been that analysis of these discourses reveals an underlying cultural mechanism equivalent with the mode of governance employed by the Communist party. I am referring here to the mirroring device through which the regular individual partakes of the divine qualities of the Logos/Absolute in order to become in its image (conversion) and thus become engaged in the building of a new civilization that will reflect the divine pattern (namely, the Kingdom of God). This is easily understood in terms of Christ and Christianity, but has also been indirectly applied to the Communist Party through the notion of “impersonal charisma”: “Charisma is typically associated with a saint or with a knight, some personal attribution, and what Lenin did was remarkable. He did exactly what he claimed to do: he created a party of a new type. He made the party charismatic. People died for the party. It’s as if people would die for the DMV. Most people don’t get too excited about the Department of Motor Vehicles because it’s a bureaucracy” (Jowitt 2000). What Jowitt is referring to, of course, is Lenin’s drastic distinction between the party and the proletariat, which led to the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletariat, Lenin affirmed, could only receive a revolutionary consciousness from the party. This idea that without the party the proletariat could never advance beyond a bourgeois consciousness, that “a spontaneous workers’ movement” was “incapable of developing a socialist consciousness,” “that the interests and aims of a social class, the proletariat, can and indeed must be determined without that class having a say in the

matter,” (Kolakowski 2005, pp.668-669) was a radical departure from Marx. From the notion of a “vanguard, leading the working class and imbuing it with socialist consciousness,” the party became the sole repository of consciousness, a sort of Logos whose total acceptance by the proletariat implied a divine type of charisma (this corresponds to Vico’s image presented in the Mirror-Mechanism chapter). From this point of view, what I describe as the mirror-mechanism is the device through which charisma is bestowed upon the party (not mentioned by Jowitt). This can be expressed another way. If the Party is responsible for bestowing consciousness on the proletariat, then the act of governance requires by its very definition the shaping of collective consciousness. It requires that governing work through altering consciousness, presumably, via a cultural mechanism. The mirror-mechanism, it is claimed here, can be understood as that presumed cultural mechanism. How does this mechanism work? Essentially this is a mechanism of identification, of identification with an image (mimesis). But it is also a mechanism that demands complete subjection of one’s self to a higher authority. This is so because, in religious terms, the methodology simultaneously demands the mirroring of divine attributes, or qualities, and the complete renunciation of the self. This thesis maintains that analysis of cultural discourses during the Ceaușescu period reveals that this mechanism has been appropriated by the Communist party in both its axes: that of the mirroring of certain qualities, and that of displaying full commitment and total sacrifice for the cause of the Party. It should be mentioned here that, since the mechanism works through identification with an image, the Party can circulate many such images and according to the needs of the moment. The party, or the Supreme Leader, need not always be in the images projected by this mechanism. Any image of any exemplary of higher humanity can suffice. For these

reasons, the mirror-mechanism has been called ‘the hero-mirror mechanism’ and its two axes have been described as:

1) the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself (People, Party, History),

2) the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good – in this context, the prescriptions/commandments/principles of the moral/social order elaborated by the Party.

It shall be noted here that by circulating different images the Party is able to target different social groups in specific ways. It shall also be noted here that while the qualities to be reflected or the type of commitment and sacrifice demanded differ from period to period (for example, the first axis can imply sacrifice in defending the nation, but also commitment to productivity), and from discourse to discourse, within the Romanian setting the two axes remain constant.

It shall also be remarked here that because it replaces ‘divinity’ with ‘man’ and ‘sacredness’ with ‘humanity’ this mechanism is essentially seen as a Humanistic one. Consequently, the assumption has been that the official discourse expressed through this mechanism is also a Humanistic one. Because the Communist party had employed the notion of “socialist humanism” to describe its ideological orientation, I have chosen to adopt this very term to describe the main discourse of the mirror-mechanism. In the context in which almost all research has tended to identify the period of the Ceaușescu regime as one of extreme nationalism (and of ‘national-communism’), I have tried to argue that this period (1964-1989) can equally be represented as a period of “socialist

humanism.” In this sense, all the cultural discourses of this period belong, in the structure of this thesis, to the period of “socialist humanism” (in itself described as the second phase of the mirror-mechanism).

One must also emphasize that there is a deeper side to the hero-mirror mechanism than what has just been described above. In the search for the origin of this mechanism in Communist Romanian culture, this hypothesis was tested and shown to apply to Platonic thought, to different levels of Russian Communist culture (in the everyday functioning of the society of the new man, at the level of political and philosophical theory or core official ideology, and as the official art discourse of socialist realism), and to certain strands of pre-Stalinist Russian culture (the Russian avant-garde, Solov’ev, 19th century radical fiction, the medieval texts documenting the life of a saint). Particularly through Foucault’s (1980, 1988, 2007) work on the Christian apparatus of pastoral power and Kotkin’s (1997) concept of ‘Theocracy,’ by way of the emphasis Clark (1981), Groys (1992) and especially Gutkin (1999) place on Solov’ev’s influence on the aesthetic of socialist realism, and through the influence of Frye (1957), this thesis has reached the conclusion that the hero-mirror mechanism is best understood as an “allegorical archetype” (Abrams 1957) (which can unfold into ontological, epistemological and anthropological frameworks), with its origin in religion. The substance of this argument can be found in the chapter entitled “The Mirror-Mechanism of the Hero” and in the discussion of Foucault’s pastoral apparatus in the “Methodology” chapter. What this trajectory of research has found, rather unexpectedly, is that the concept of the mirror-mechanism coincides with a key theological structure. To put it short, while the mirror-mechanism corresponds to the notion of imago Dei, its axis of sacrifice resembles that of

“kenosis,” and its axis of purity of heart and mirroring of the Divine resembles that of “imitatio Dei” (see subsection entitled “The Mirror-Mechanism and Religion”). Furthermore, this development in turn indicated that the mirror-mechanism can be imagined as a structure which prefigures, but from only one step away, the Christian apparatus of pastoral power and its technologies of self (such as the examination of conscience and confession). Further parallels were thus also established between the two axes of the mirror-mechanism, technologies of self such as “exomologesis” and “exagoreusis” (Foucault 1988, 2007), and Stalinist purification practices (“purges,” “verifications,” and “self-examination”) (Kotkin 1997), while analogies were also established with Clark’s (1981) notion of the “master-plot” and Gutkin’s (1999) avant-garde notions of “life-building” (Solov’ev inspired) and “the struggle with byt.” This, then, is the deeper level at which the structure of the humanistic hero-mirror mechanism can be found, and where it might find some renewed legitimacy and confirmation as a hypothesis for the space of Communist culture. Finally, this is the mechanism through which certain cultural discourses of the Ceaușist period are being examined in relation to the official discourse alongside three dimensions of research, as identity discourses, as intellectual discourses and as discourses of resistance, each with its own universes of investigation, and each with its own findings in the conclusion.

At this point, certain methodological issues must be discussed before proceeding with a presentation of the structure of the dissertation and its chapters.

As indicated in the section “A Framework for Understanding Foucault’s Notion of Discourse,” the issue of the selection of certain discourses and not others points to a weakness in discourse analysis that can never be fully resolved in objective manner.

Simply put, the notion of discourse refers almost simultaneously both to a terrain of knowledge to be investigated over a certain period of time, and to the inner structure that actually forms that terrain of knowledge. The idea is that the first term leads to the second, but the manner of selection of a territory cannot be dissociated from notions that heavily anticipate or pre-constitute the second term. The notion of discourse is, therefore, at least a double structure – there are two discourses, with one the alleged deeper structure of the other, and there is no way to fully conceptualize them separately. In my opinion, the problems highlighted are part and parcel of the process of knowledge and cannot be fully escaped. In hermeneutical terms, I associate them with the notion of “pre-understanding” and that of “the hermeneutic circle” (Thiselton 2009, p.14).

Nonetheless, there are several reasons for which certain discourses have been selected for analysis in this thesis and not others. From the very beginning an initial concern has been to deal with those discourses most influential in shaping collective cultural identity in the Communist period, but also beyond, because of their continuations into the recent present. This option materialized with the need to expand the inductive method responsible for the hypothesis of the mirror-mechanism from marginal and forgotten cultural discourses (see Cernat et al. 2004) to more established discourses. In this I have used the literature about Romanian Communism at my disposal, most of which revolves around the larger discourses of the nation, Marxism and a supposed Romanian Stalinism. This PhD thesis, therefore, mediates between the larger discourses of the nation and Marxism, and the more niche Communist cultural products analyzed by Cernat et al. (2004) by proposing an intermediate but related unit of analysis: popular and influential⁴ cultural discourses of the Ceaușist period as tested against the

⁴ An alternative term here could have been “middlebrow” cultural discourses, which is one of the terms

humanistic device of the hero-mirror mechanism (and against the main official ideology). In the manner of their specific selection, however, I have not been innovative. The discourses selected are discourses whose popularity is still very high and whose leaders or exponents play a central role on the Romanian cultural and/or political scene (or have done so until recently), where claims about the exemplars of true resistance to Communism are constantly interchanged. Moreover, the selection of these discourses seems to reflect a vague consensus in the literature on Romanian Communism. Protochronism and the Noica School, for example, feature heavily in the analyses of the ideology of the Communist regime performed by Verdery (1991), Deletant (1998) and Martin (2002ii, 2002iv, 2003, 2003i), which also mention Adrian Păunescu. On the other hand, Cernat et al. (2004) offer the first important essay on the Flacăra Cenacle while also highlighting the role of the G60 poetry to the regime's ideology. Finally, the importance of all these discourses (including that of the Păltiniș Group and of the G80) in relation to the Communist regime and also post-communism features heavily in the collected essays of Dobrescu (1998, 2001), while mention of most of them is made again, in more fleeting and subjective a manner, in Cernat et al. 2004i. More recently, in a book whose topic very much resembles the subject of this dissertation, Matei (2011) again invokes the same discourses in his attempt to trace the continuations and mutations of "romantic Communism" (a syntagm which positions Romanticism as the origin of Communist aesthetics and emphasizes the notion of the hero⁵ as embodying the best of

Clark (1981, vi) uses in reference to the novels of socialist realism. However, the term would have been partly misleading as these discourses were ideologically required and sometimes even self-propelled to advance on a continuum between high and middlebrow culture and did so to different degrees.

⁵ "The desire of (post-) Christian, modern, Occidental man of being a hero surpasses all the others. Coupled with the will to power, this wish has made the idea of Communism the standard-idea of the last century" (Matei 2011, p.17).

humanity) during post-communism (pp.15-16). Essentially, then, this selection is one that captures most of the dominant cultural discourses and intellectual groups on the cultural and/or political scene before and after 1989 (a selection itself influenced by the literary-centeredness of Romanian culture), classification about which there is some vague implicit consensus. The only exception to the rule is constituted by the G80, whose discourse cannot be claimed to have become publicly influential until after 1989, concomitant with the rising popularity of Cărtărescu. Nonetheless, the discourse of the G80 has been essential in post-communism and the movement belongs, through its roots and its most significant works, to the early 1980s, reason for which it has been included here.

A word should be also said here about the distinction between primary and secondary sources in the bibliography. A hermeneutical approach must rely on a very good sample of primary sources, doubled by recognized secondary ones. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of this study (meaning, the diversity of primary sources to be covered and the lack of expertise in doing so) and the nature of the discourses under scrutiny (the discourse of the nation, protochronism and poetry are not easily approached via a purely hermeneutical method), the hermeneutical methodology chosen has had to be supplanted with that of archetypal criticism and also that of the history of ideas. This has led to instances in which the author has had to rely a lot more on the secondary view of experts than on primary material. In such cases, the challenge really has been how to integrate the resulting assessment of different and diverse secondary sources (from established to non-conventional ones) in a way best reflective of existent and accessible primary material. Chapters such as “The Turn to Nationalism,” “Solar Lyricism,” and

the “Flacăra Cenacle” are the most clear-cut examples of this type of integration. Still the same, but less so, applies to the chapters on protochronism and the G80. The direction of the first is heavily influenced by the report of Anneli Maier (1977) and different movies of that period, but also, by secondary sources such as Cernat et al. (2004) and Verdery (1991). In the case of the G80 the situation is slightly stranger, as primary material such as Crăciun (1999) and Muşina (2002) etc. lives alongside secondary literature written nevertheless by key poetic figures of the G80 such as Cărtărescu (1999), Bodiş (2000) and Muşina (1988) or by former members like Oţoiu (2003), all sources essential to that chapter. Finally, the sections on the Noica School and the Păltiniş Group rely considerably more on the original texts of key members, although the contribution of secondary sources remains still important. This diversity of balance between different types of sources could not be captured in the bibliography, which remains traditionally divided between primary and secondary sources and in alphabetical order.

The question has also been asked in relation to the title of this thesis of whether I had thought of Ceauşism as a term referring only to a chronological period, or as also a term referring to an ideological process shaping post-socialist cultural debates elsewhere. My first answer here is that Ceauşism refers both to a chronological period and to a unique political and social system which deserves to be studied on its own (see Crowther 1988). However, the questioning can continue, does not the overlapping and in some cases the clear lines of continuity invoked by this thesis between communist and post-communist cultural discourses betray a notion of ideological process? Two types of answers can be given here, depending on how the notion of ideological process is interpreted. If by

ideological process a certain general ideology is alluded to, some forms of continuity are indeed observable through the notion of the mirror-device as a mechanism for the governing of culture and the ideology of socialist humanism it endorses. However, while it is essential that this continuity be emphasized, it is too early to claim that the type of ideological process it describes is fully identical with Ceaușism. Firstly, as shown in the section dealing with the roots of the mirror-mechanism, the notion or device is not at all uniquely or particularly Ceaușist. Secondly, what actually constitutes the official discourse of the Communist regime under Ceaușescu is still a topic in need of much further elaboration. My option in this case would be to employ Ceaușism as a temporal concept, while maintaining awareness that the term could also be envisaged as an ideological process were it for the notions of the mirror-mechanism and socialist humanism to be confirmed as central to the nature of the Ceaușist regime through further research (and essentially, through also research taking place outside the cultural domain).

If by ideological process reference is made to something extending on the continuum between the notion of the ‘noble delusion’ and manipulation of the masses⁶ and implying the actions of the “power elite,” then three reasons must be given for why I have not engaged with such a perspective, all of them derived from my methodology.

On the hermeneutic side my emphasis has been to operate primarily with a hermeneutics of recovery (Ricoeur) rather than with one of suspicion. On the Foucauldian side I was

⁶ See the definition provided by Domhoff (1978): “The ideology process consists of the numerous methods through which members of the power elite attempt to shape the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of the underlying population. ... Free and open discussion are claimed to be the hallmarks of the process, but past experience shows that its leaders will utilize deceit and violence in order to combat individuals or organizations which espouse attitudes and opinions that threaten the power and privileges of the ruling class.”

more interested in the nature of discursive formations rather than in discourses emanating from the subject. To that extent, it would have sufficed to me if the discourse could have been shown to perform a certain function, whether or not its agent or carrier intended it. Thirdly, the tradition of archetypal criticism directed my interest more towards investigating the mirror-mechanism as a theoretical construct or structure that became central in Communism (the questions being why? and how?), rather than on its use as ideological process after. Nevertheless, the question of ideological process can be impersonally formulated through the use of analysis of discourses until a certain point. I will take the example of the Păltiniș Group⁷, because it is the most prominent example to have been discussed in this light in post-Communist Romania. In an article from 2006 entitled “Why Noica is not Strauss (and neither Liiceanu, Bloom),” Caius Dobrescu, for example, raised the issue that the Păltiniș Group members see themselves as an elite of the spirit while also actively manipulating their public image, possibly even by the inclusion of an intellectual that would fit more the profile of Strauss and of the Chicago School, namely, of Patapievici. From a similar perspective, Matei (2004) had described the Păltiniș Group as a group whose prestige is built on charisma, developing the explanation around the inclusion of Patapievici in the group. Matei’s book, however, received some strong criticism including a devastating one from Cistelean (2006). Both these perspectives are examples which have attributed the Păltiniș Group the intended and specific use of the hero-mirror mechanism for certain questionable purposes. The mirror-mechanism, as has been employed in this thesis, would probably pose this problem at the level of discourse in a slightly different way.

⁷ I am in fact forced to use this example because any positive answer to the notion of ideological process as Ceaușism would immediately imply that the Păltiniș Group is somehow Ceaușist.

The Noica School most likely did not operate with the much invoked by Strauss Platonic notion of ‘the noble delusion’ but rather with a notion of “inner utopia” (Șerban 2010) or of “the primacy of the spiritual” (Șiulea 2005). These notions emphasized the internal dimension of the self as a realm of spirituality which should be prioritized over material existence, history and politics. Politics was to be a spiritualizing revolution of the heart, or almost nothing of interest at all. There was an ‘aristocracy of the spirit’ but not one interested in politics. ‘The noble delusion’ does not fit well with this. From these notions, however, the Noica School was constituted into an apparatus of pastoral power like the ones described by Foucault through which the master-disciple relation was extended not only to the individual but also to society. In other words, the elite of the spirit had to provide, in accordance with the pastoral model, for the spiritual development of the masses. The elite had to reach a level of training where they could perceive the diseases affecting the life or soul of the nation and prescribe a cure. At the same time, this was imagined as a process from which each side would benefit spiritually. In this sense I would argue, like Dobrescu (2006), that Noica is unlike Strauss. However, after the death of Noica, his disciples entered the field of politics and eventually married the pastoral model with the techniques and power of the state, continuing to attempt a process of the purification of the collective self (and of themselves), not only through the example of charisma and knowledge, but through attempting to bear influence on policies and legislation spanning from anti-communism, to education and to the Constitution. They have done this in the open, but mostly, I would still argue, through their pastoral influence and its use in strategic alliances. Their openly stated aim has been the re-education of society into a certain mindset and set of values (one that, in their opinion, would heal the remnants of the Communist past),

meaning, their own. This sounds very much like ideological process in some ways but this is done in the open (similar, in some respects, to the agenda of an NGO), and the key issue of whether the Păltiniș group should be seen as supportive or part of the ruling elite is not at all straightforward at this point. Is it important to understand how under the guise of pastoral power they have legitimated particular sectors of political power as a means of sustaining their own project and agenda as described above? And to ask who has benefited from this most and least and whether they have been supportive, if not part, of a “power elite”? Yes, if we are to ever understand their influence as public-intellectuals. I would also admit that despite Tănăsoiu (2003)⁸ a less complimentary analysis of the political role of main intellectuals in post-Communist Romania (both in terms of positive and negative achievements) is sorely needed. Were there instances of hermeneutical interpretation where books such as Liiceanu’s “Despre ură”⁹ (‘About Hate’), and the exchange between the Matei-led¹⁰ collective project of “Idols of the Forum”¹¹ and the Tismăneanu-led (2010i) “The Resentment Dossier” made considerably more sense as examples of an ideological process and/or a marketing campaign, than as arguments developed coherently or systematically and out of a real concern for a certain thematic? Yes, they were. But it is my opinion that, preferably in a hermeneutical approach, such realizations should be expressed (as legitimate possibilities of interpretation) only at the level of the text, through a very detailed examination that

⁸ An excellent PhD dissertation otherwise, and not to be too harshly judged considering the time of its appearance, when the positive estimation of the roles of the Păltiniș Group and the GDS (Group for Social Dialogue) was at its highest.

⁹ See Cistelean (2006i).

¹⁰ Such analysis has been performed as part of this project but will not be included here because of its length and other considerations relating to the fact that the Păltiniș Group chapter it was part of had to be removed and replaced with a summary.

¹¹ This is a statement about the orientation of the project as a whole and not about individual articles out of which a small number are, without doubt, extremely valuable. Also I should mention here that I do not include Matei’s first book, “Boyars of the mind” in the same category.

allows the text to ‘speak for itself,’ and not as general judgments about groups or individuals, which would lack the backing of social-political analyses in this case. This is as far I can see the mirror-mechanism go in terms of providing an answer to the issue of ideological process based on this thesis.¹² Overall, then, the preference has been to treat the authors of discourses as a function and carrier of a certain discourse and hermeneutically, as living subjects. This is not to say, however, that a key material dimension is not missing from this research, which could have accounted better for the uses of power and status.

With this, the discussion of methodological concerns has come to an end, making way for a presentation of the structure of the dissertation and the chapters that follow the introduction.

To start with, certain indications should be given about the peculiar structure of the thesis, which is that of a sphere. The traditional view will have it that this represents the systemic and ordering function of a unifying symbol as the archetype. The more radical imagination will view it as a pulverized archetype (or Logos) resembling an exploded supernova (Braga 2006) with a fragment of the sun still to be found. In this case, the structure of the thesis resembles a journey from the periphery of a sphere to its centre and then out again. The thesis starts with an analysis of Romania’s transition process in the recent present (in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4), then goes back in time to 1945 from where it gradually emerges in post-communism by travelling through the period of the Ceaușist regime, all in successive stages. It also presupposes a journey from an external discursive space of transition to an internal one and then through to discourses within it,

¹² Although this thesis has suggested that the discourse of anti-Communism provides a perfect ground for a Foucauldian analysis, I was not able to pursue such a direction here.

leading to a central mechanism, with different forms and with a centre, which then again expands into a mechanism travelling through different discourses and periods back to the discursive space of transition. Something the Table of Contents could not represent, therefore, is the fact that, in the scheme of the thesis, Chapter 4 ('The Discursive Space of Transition: The External Context') is self-standing, while Chapters 7-12 should all be viewed as deriving from or as being subsumed under Chapter 5 (that is, under the discourse of Socialist Humanism). Similarly, while the Table of Contents assimilated without my awareness the idea that the notion of the mirror-mechanism should be positioned, as its main hypothesis, at the centre of the thesis (Chapter 6), there are problems with keeping the most significant section of the mirror-mechanism chapter ('The Roots of the Mirror-Mechanism' section, and, especially, the 'Mirror-Mechanism and Religion' subsection) also in the middle of the thesis, where it should belong. This is where it would fit conceptually and this is where I have placed it, but its length in comparison with the other subsections around might be disconcerting to the reader. With these guidelines established, the order of the dissertation can now be described chapter by chapter.

This introduction constitutes the first chapter of the thesis. The second chapter is a literature review which traces the journey from an original vision concerned with assessing the Romanian HE system against the needs of a transitional society (barred by the lack of research into the actual state of the HE system), to a concern with policy-making and concrete evaluations of the transition (deterred by the inchoate, pre-paradigmatic and heavily neo-liberal character of the social sciences and by their lack of meaningful debate about policy models and the nature of transition), and, finally, into

the realm of cultural discourses (where transition is discussed mainly as a competition between cultural models) from which the notion of the hero-mirror mechanism ultimately springs forth as the main hypothesis. Chapter 3 discusses theoretical and comparative perspectives informing the main hypothesis and unveils a research methodology which combines Foucault with hermeneutics, archetypal criticism and the history of ideas. The same chapter specifies how the notion of cultural discourses has been employed in this thesis, and highlights the reasons for which the mirror-mechanism should be envisaged as an “allegorical archetype” and as a device that closely prefigures Foucault’s apparatus of pastoral power.

In this thesis, a specific application of the hermeneutic circle has been to posit the notion of a discursive space as the domain (a ‘whole’) where discourses of different kinds, as the ones analysed in this work, formulate and meet each-other in interaction (interdiscursivity). This dissertation, therefore, has been metaphorically structured into two sections. Thus, while Chapter 4 outlines the general features of a ‘discursive space of transition’ as reflected in Romania’s post-1989 external context, Chapter 5 attempts the same but in relation to the interior social-political and cultural context of Communist Romania and its continuations into the present. Chapter 5, under which Chapters 7-13 are subsumed, likens Communism to religion and conceptualizes its transformation of Romanian society in terms of two religious metaphors (inhale/destruction and exhale/creation) indicative of two distinct phases: one in which society is emptied of its previous form and content, and another, in which it is filled with a new meaning. These phases are then identified as socialist realism (1945-1964) and socialist humanism (1964-1989) based on the two types of discourses they seem to promote (but which are

nevertheless judged to stem out from the same nucleus of the hero-mirror mechanism). The hero-mirror mechanism is then accounted for in great detail in Chapter 6. Here, its formulation as a hypothesis through an inductive investigation of texts from Cernat et al. (2004), is followed by a search for its origin which confirms it at the level of Platonic thought, Russian Communist culture and pre-Stalinist culture and which ultimately posits its roots in religion. From this point onward, the testing of the hypothesis is expanded from marginal and forgotten cultural productions in Communism to Ceaușist cultural discourses highly influential in the public domain during and after 1989, and this gives the main body of the thesis. Because of methodological reasons, the analysis of each chapter until the conclusion occurs from now on in three parts. The first part approaches cultural discourses as symbolic discourses and applies to them a hermeneutical analysis that seeks to capture their ‘essential’ nature. The resulting essence-like characterizations of such cultural discourses are then assessed alongside the axes of the mirror-mechanism via the use of archetypal criticism in the second part. Finally, the third part examines the type of resistance these discourses put forward. This is why it can be said that the mirror-mechanism involves three dimensions of research, each with its own findings in the conclusion: discourses as identity discourses (concerned with the deconstruction of Romanian identity), as intellectual discourses (focusing on intellectual groups, their cultural models and their arrangement in the cultural field) and discourses of resistance (concerned with the very contested issue of resistance in Communism).

Within this structure, the sequence of chapters now subsumed under the phase and discourse of ‘socialist humanism’ (1964-1989) follows their chronological order.

Chapter 7, therefore, sets out to investigate why the Romanian Communist regime is presumed to have turned towards the ideology of the nation in the early 60s. This chapter juxtaposes Tănase's (1998) elite theory with Verdery's (1991) 'indigenization of Marxism' thesis and Martin's (2002iv) alternative argument in favour of the "communization of the nation." The chapter also examines other assessments of the nature of Ceaușescu's regime, reframes the problematic examined by suggesting that the elite of the Communist Party had most likely internalized key aspects of the nationalistic discourse even prior to 1949 or 1962, and examines the connections between the discourse of the nation and 'socialist humanism.' Next, Chapter 8 discusses the recuperation of aestheticism, particularly under the form of a certain type of lyricism advanced by the G60 in poetry, which follows the 1960s return to nationalism. The end of Chapter 8 sees the notion of "inner utopia" introduced and presented as an example of how the discourses analyzed in Chapters 7-13 tend to reinforce each other. Following on this, chapter 9 offers an interdisciplinary synthesis of perspectives on protochronism, shows that the question of whether protochronism derives from the nature of the regime or from the structure of the cultural field has not been adequately answered yet, and reveals its confirmation of the mirror-mechanism (and of 'socialist humanism'). Chapter 10 reveals how Noica's tactic of ju-jitsu aimed to transform the Communist hero of the mirror-mechanism primarily into a cultural hero. Here, the scheme at the core of Noica's ontology is shown to reflect the notion of the mirror-mechanism particularly in its deeper level as theological structure. Furthermore, while Noica's implied Humanistic ethics corresponds well to the axis of 'imitatio Dei,' his School or pedagogical project confirms the mirror-mechanism in both its axes. Finally, the nationalistic orientation in

Noica's writings, his humanistic inclination and his 'paideia' are all assessed in terms of what they offered as resistance.

In Chapter 11, the Flacăra Cenacle is presented as a humanist counter-culture movement sanctioned by the state, which combines the lyrical discourse of the 60s, the humanistic discourse of the regime and the nationalist-communist (protochronist) discourse with that of the hippie movement. While its long-lasting appeal derives from its nature as kitsch, the Flacăra Cenacle is innovative in that it applies the mirror-mechanism to the construction of a certain type of collective mental space, i.e., as a form of collective 'aesthetical self-fictionalization' (Poenaru 2010). This chapter also captures the debate triggered by the media spectacle at the death of Păunescu between exponents and critics of 'the anti-Communist ideology.'

Finally, Chapter 12 examines arguments in favour and against the postmodernist nature of the G80, notes its humanistic orientation and offers an assessment of the G80 paradigm which confirms its discourse as the first to displace the hero-mirror mechanism.

Listed as Chapter 13, the conclusion hints at the potential contribution of the mirror-mechanism to Voegelin's notion of 'political religion' and at its applicability to also Fascist regimes, while also highlighting the limitations of the dissertation as a whole. As previously indicated, the conclusion reports the findings of three dimensions of research that run throughout the thesis: discourses as identity discourses, as intellectual discourses and as discourses of resistance. The first dimension looks at post-communist art discourses that further delegitimize the mirror-mechanism (Fracturism and the

Romanian New Wave, etc.) and at discourses which continue it into post-communism (Protochronism, Mr. Becali's and that of the Păltiniș Group) concluding that the mirror-mechanism has, nevertheless, almost fully dissipated. The second dimension's main finding is that the notion of 'inner utopia' is so dominant amongst the intellectual elites and in society at large, that 'true education' is viewed as lying outside the provinces of formal institutions (for true spiritual education cannot occur in formal institutions), which signals an important divide between the HE system and the cultural field. Finally the third dimension proposes an alternative taxonomy of resistance, while pointing out that in the case of Romania, cultural discourses should be viewed more as discourses of "evasion" rather than as discourses of resistance.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Beginning: An Educational Vision and the Challenge of Transition

The author has started this project motivated by an educational vision according to which the role of an educational system must be derived from the needs of society, particularly when that society is experiencing a very turbulent transition. This is in following with the general line of inquiry present in Dewey (1916), Whitehead (1967), Tanner and Tanner (1995), Freire (2000), Botkin et al. (1998) that education should be “focused on problem solving and critical thinking as applied to living situations” (Tanner and Tanner 1995, p.3) and which, in the Romanian context, figures most prominently in the “Învățământul Românesc Azi” (“Romanian Education Today”) report: “Firstly, our analysis is founded on the idea that the manner in which Romanian education presents itself is in a large measure dependent on the state of Romanian society” (Miroiu et al. 1998, p.10).

Such an approach would have required some assessment of the current educational system as measured against some evaluation of the current state of society. However, if the society to be looked at is in a process of transition that can be described as the movement from a state A to a state B, from “a point of departure” to “a point of arrival” (Stănciulescu 2002, p.29), the issue of assessment necessarily involves a triple reality of past, present and future. If transition, as “the passage of a social system from one model of organization to another” (Zamfir 2004, p.4) is from A to B, what are A and B and how does that relate to the present? More problematic is that such an analysis is required in a context in which the disciplines of social science are themselves undergoing a

significant transition, being themselves engaged in a process of uneven development, reformulation, revival, realignment and sometimes even simply of emergence. To account for the meaning of transition represents therefore a full blown epistemological problem in that the academic disciplines in use are themselves motivated and directed by particular understandings and agendas about the transition process (as well as about their own constitution as disciplines) which are themselves not fully completed or conceptualized, but in a state of flux. In that sense, the knowledge about transition developed by any academic field reflects the state of development of that field; where those fields are not fully developed or functional, findings must be, by necessity, correlated with findings and perspectives from other fields. In such a context, integration of knowledge becomes key not only as interdisciplinarity, but also in terms of formulating what brings one specific academic field together, when such fields are nascent, dispersed or 'pre-paradigmatic' (Kuhn 1970). In some cases this sort of evaluation can and should result in providing a de-mystifying critique of an existent field/subject. Whatever the case, the Romanian scholar, most often than not, does not benefit from the Western advantage of relying on a discipline that is relatively settled on its paradigms, trends, methods and traditions of research and which holds a self-constitution and findings developed gradually over time¹³.

¹³ This portion, as well as the entire section on the Romanian HE, has been inspired by the work of Becher and Trowler (2001).

Romanian HE and the Challenge of Transition

It is with this problematic that this research project commenced in 2006. Then, like now, I maintain the opinion that the Romanian field of education and especially that of Higher Education, have generally failed to produce adequate research of the Communist past (point A) and of the post-Communist present, being concerned primarily with developing and implementing a program of reform for the future (so with point B) based on a generalized notion of a Western model.

Studies of the Communist Past and Their Legacy

Thus, the works of Sadlak (1988, 1990, 1991; Sadlak and Vlăsceanu 2001) which rely on general statistics and careful analysis of legislation and policy statements to formulate a general overview of the Romanian HE system in its historical development are to date the only meaningful assessments of the Communist period¹⁴. Their influence on Romanian scholars and policy-makers cannot be overstated, particularly in terms of setting a model of scholarship and reporting on HE that in diluted form is dominant even today.

By this, I am referring to a model which relies on the general statistical data usually provided by the NIS (National Institute of Statistics) and on existent legislation and policy documents (as well as on the mix of personal experience in the field with perusal

¹⁴ A study that touches on Romanian HE is the work by Wolter et al. (1986) on approaches to planning of higher education in CMEA countries. From outside the field of education, noteworthy efforts are especially the studies of social mobility by Cazacu (1974, 1991), then Gheorghiu's (2007) study of party-intellectuals' formation and Pălășan's (2009i) historical incursion into party regulations regarding the role of social science at the beginning of Ceaușescu's regime. To these can be added the general educational reports of Randolph Braham (1964, 1972) which have sections on the HE system.

of available literature on HE in the West) to produce reports that either offer a general description of the HE system at a certain point in time, or which advocate for a general direction of reform (usually both). Most research written on the Romanian HE system from 1989 until today reflects this model with the writer usually adopting simultaneously the paradoxical standpoints of researcher, policy-maker, analyst for a EU funded body or a World Bank project, and government official devising and implementing the reform of HE education. As it can be observed, therefore, the field of HE in Romania (and there would be good reasons to argue that such a field, if it exists, has been constituted not so much inside the academic domain as outside of it in the policy-making realm) does not produce research and literature about the actual state and processes of the HE system, outside the general statistical data provided by the NIS (which is only sometimes supplanted with questionnaires or opinion polls and, very rarely, with interviews). No real qualitative data (or independent data outside government agencies) is produced about any essential aspects of the HE system, which is why one could assert that Romania has not developed an adequate instrument for looking at the quality of HE programs and of the student, faculty and staff experience. At the same time, no qualitative studies of the actual state of the HE system (or of any parts of it) are undertaken before or after reform initiatives, which have been somewhat continuous (at least in terms of legislation) since 1989. Considering that the type of statistical information the NIS can provide concerns aspects such as number of students enrolled broken down by mode of study, discipline, course, institution, region, ratio to teachers, completion or non-completion of study, cycle of study (BA, MA, PhD), size of class, financial aid, gender and so on, it is clear that the representations of the HE system being constructed through such data cannot touch on the reality of what happens inside

the system. To use an expression coined by Black and William (2001, p.1), these representations, which could be thought of also as simulacra, treat the university (both in terms of research and policy) as a “black box”: “Certain inputs from the outside are fed in...Some outputs follow...But what is happening inside? How can anyone be sure that a particular set of new inputs will produce better outputs if we don’t at least study what happens inside?” The policy-makers and researchers studying and reforming the Romanian HE sector, one could argue, are thus constantly operating with simulacra of the HE system. They are reforming a simulacrum they have constructed, not something that could resemble in any depth the real system. It is because of this that at the end of decades of Western and European reform in HE, particularly in relation to quality, assessment and good management practice, we end up with huge explosions of plagiarism¹⁵, a key indicator about the real health of any HE system: “Government ministers are proven serial plagiarists, students acquire their dissertations for modest sums online, and a failure to investigate allows widespread cheating to take place without censure. Everyone gets a degree, nearly all MPs are also professors at a university they helped to gain accreditation through their influence, and all seem to

¹⁵ In 2012, some of the key figures involved were the current Prime-Minister Victor Ponta, the current General Prosecutor of Romania Laura Codruța Kovesi, the current Minister of Environment and Forrests Rovana Plumb and Ministers of Education Ioan Mang and Ecaterina Andronescu. Only Mang and then Corina Dumitrescu, who would have been nominalized to succeed him otherwise, lost their positions due to plagiarism revelations. Under the leadership of Andronescu (July 2012-December 2012) and her successor Remus Pricopie, the Ministry of Education managed to deliver, in most controversial a manner (part of the argument being that the current law allows for some degree of plagiarism), verdicts absolving the first two (Ponta and Kovesi) of plagiarism charges. That these instances are part of a larger phenomenon of “institutional plagiarism” (for example, the term ‘plagiarism’ itself has been given little to no prominence in the University Charta or the Ethical Code of major universities, and current national legislation is cumbersome and ineffective in providing a mechanism for identifying and preventing such a phenomenon; when such legislation and mechanisms do threaten to act the political factor replaces the membership of the commissions involved affecting the outcome; bodies directly responsible like CNE - National Council of Ethics and CNATDCU – the National Council for Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates are either purposefully dormant or engage in whitewash practices) has been clearly documented by Sandu (2012, 2012i).

benefit; however, no Romanian university features in the “Times Higher Education World University Rankings” and the country is stagnating without skilled labour” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013). There is a big distance between the simulacrum and the real system.

Studies Grounded in a Vision of the Future

Therefore, I consider these types of studies, which follow the model of research described above, as primarily anchored not in the reality of the post-communist present, but in a vision of implementing reform for the future that is almost in its entirety ideologically derived. The main impetus of these studies is to introduce or record change, but the basis for legitimating this type of change lies primarily with policy visions or models of policy-making developed in the West and, only secondarily, with whatever actual data of the HE system has been collected (which is usually only of the NIS kind, and only more recently, sets of statistical and descriptive data provided by universities about themselves according to set parameters and categories of interpretation). In the absence of self-constructed policy visions for HE, which could only derive from intimate knowledge about the inner processes of Romanian HE, it is obvious that the organization of statistical data into plans for reform would not be possible without certain ideological underpinnings, in this case almost entirely derived from Western models of HE policy-making. Why and how the policy-based agenda of Romanian HE is a Western one and whether that is good or bad in the current context is an issue of great complexity, which I will nevertheless attempt to touch on here. But

until then, it is important to acknowledge that judging by the studies described above, which constitute a representative sample of the majority of research being produced, certain features of Romanian HE as an academic field can be distinguished. Romanian HE is limited to describing, if not actively seeking to legitimize, the programmatic character of government reform in education; it does not produce research of the different aspects of the HE system (beyond operating with statistics and rarely with questionnaires or opinion-polls) and it does not possess a qualitative dimension to its evaluations (well-structured interviews are rare); it does not produce tests or evaluations regarding the impact of reform and in certain manner it does not produce even minimal critiques of the unfolding government reform in education, or of the EU and the World Bank or any other international agencies involved. One way to explain this is that, possibly due to a lack of research and policy-making capacity, the focus of HE researchers has been entirely spent on kick-starting the process of educational reform from positions which are, if not close to, than almost within the government. Whatever the case, the studies that fall in the category above still carry an essential value, and as it stands, give most of the main corpus of literature on Romanian HE. I am referring here to authors and texts such as Mihăilescu (1996) Mihăilescu and Vlăsceanu (1994), Eisemon et al. (1995), Marga (1999i, 1999ii), Nicolescu (2000, 2002), OECD (2000), Sadlak and Vlăsceanu (2001), Vlăsceanu et al. (2001), Korca (2000, 2002), Taylor and Miroiu (2002), Miroiu (2005), David (2006), Singer and Sarivan (2006), Comşa et al. (2007), Miclea et al. (2007), Miron et al. (2007), Roman and Suciuc (2007), Roman (2008), Korca and Sturza (2009), ARACIS (2009), Teodorescu and Andrei (2009), Andrei et al. (2010), Miroiu and Andreescu (2010), Vlăsceanu et al. (2010), Agachi et al. (2011), ARACIS (2011), Florea and Wells (2011), Păunescu et al. (2011), Andreescu

et al. (2012), Miroiu and Vlăsceanu (2012), Păunescu et al. (2012) and Vlăsceanu and Hâncean (2012)¹⁶.

Certain things should be mentioned here. Firstly, in his works, Korca (2000, 2002) most competently advocates the ideals of government-led HE reform in Romania through portrayal of a European vision based on the Bologna declaration, and notions such as entrepreneurialism, globalization and the knowledge society. Equally, however, his model of reform (which is also the one officially supported by the government) assumes a generalized and unique version of a Western model for the HE sector, and one that is extremely neo-liberal in its assumptions. Whether this is an honest appraisal or one conditioned by the institutional position of the author, what matters is that no critique is extended to the European project or to the presumed ideal Western program for reform (or, obviously, to the government): one is simply to embrace such reform. Essentially, this sort of outlook is generally the norm for all the other studies despite the warnings of Sadlak and Vlăsceanu (2001, p.3): “While initially an abstract model of higher education was taken as a frame of reference (for example, the ‘European’ university, ‘European’ standards, ‘the university’ of the developed world, etc.), it has now become evident that such a model is not available in practice. Moreover, the higher education systems of the Western European countries have themselves been confronted with the need for change. What were taken as fixed and unquestionable references proved to be moving targets.”

Secondly, some of the studies above do involve opinion polls (questionnaire-based) of students, university staff and employers [Roman and Suci (2007), Comşa et al. (2007), ARACIS (2009), Vlăsceanu et al. (2010)], but these assessments of levels of perceptions

¹⁶ This list does not aim to be definitive or all-encompassing but simply representative.

are not followed up with more in-depth investigations [Nicolescu (2002) is a possible exception here], about what had caused them or how they should be interpreted. An interesting if not paradoxical assessment of such findings is offered by ARACIS (2011). This study views the apparent satisfaction of respondents with higher education services as a “uniformity of perceptions” derived from the “weak institutional differentiation of Romanian higher education” (idem, p.8). In a strongly centralized system which creates a high level of structural isomorphism through a) the “set of uniform criteria of ARACIS” (The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), b) the “so-called basic funding system” operated by CNFIS (National Council for Higher Education Funding), and c) the disconnect between local government or private enterprise and the educational services, only some actors (doctoral advisers, deans, rectors, PhD students and faculty member with high levels of ISI-indexed publications) tend to display a level of critical awareness that transcends the general stereotypes (pp.12, 5, 9, 15).

Thirdly, the need for ‘institutional differentiation and institutional diversity’ within the Romanian HE sector is highlighted not only by ARACIS (2011), but also by Miroiu and Andreescu (2010), Vlăsceanu et al. (2010), Păunescu et al. (2011), Andreescu et al. (2012), Miroiu and Vlăsceanu (2012), Păunescu et al. (2012) and Vlăsceanu and Hâncean (2012).

What these authors reveal in these texts is not only a homogenous vision but also an incredibly similar discourse, both supportive and explanatory of the HE reform introduced by the 2011 National Law of Education. It should be emphasized at this point that most of these authors either work on bodies implementing the reform, such as

ARACIS (Păunescu), CNFIS or both (Vlăsceanu, Miroiu), or have participated in drafting key reports for these bodies (Hâncean, Andreescu, Florian, Gheorghiu), or are actually members of UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation - which incorporates CNFIS) (Andreescu, Curaj). The theme of diversification is not at all new even in Romanian HE literature [see for example the 1980's debate between the two policy-positions of "diversification of higher education" and that of "integrated higher education" recorded by Wolter et al. (1986, p.91), or discussion of the theme of diversification by Sadlak and Vlăsceanu (2001)], but this new policy discourse reflects a particular configuration in the larger discourse of quality promoted both by national governments in Europe and the EU. Without any clear theoretical foundations or reliance on empirical studies (for an example of these see Van Vught, 2007), the 'institutional differentiation and diversity' policy discourse simply copies a strong managerialist version of the Western discourse of quality, at some points even in more extreme forms than has been attempted in the West. Certain key assumptions structure this discourse. Firstly, that institutional differentiation and diversity is good in itself, for all the participants and beneficiaries of Romanian HE: "Higher education systems with diverse and differentiated institutions are considered to have an increased capacity to satisfy the various expectations of beneficiaries. ... Several dimensions of such an outcome are usually considered: provision of wider and diverse learning opportunities, increased capacity for institutional adaptation to students' needs, and increased institutional flexibility in responding to domestic and wider social changes" Vlăsceanu and Hâncean (2012, p.55). Secondly, that the homogenization of the Romanian HE system has been caused primarily by the action of the state through 1) the quality/accreditation procedures and indicators developed by

ARACIS and 2) the equalitarian funding system and policies developed by CNFIS, both having been too top-down, rigid and uniform in previous times. Thirdly, that the introduction of “free enterprise, competitive pressures and the operation of market mechanisms’ (Taylor 2003, p.286) into HE, although very desirable, does not by itself lead to the effect of institutional differentiation and diversity in the absence of planned strong state intervention (Miroiu and Andreescu 2010, pp.97-98): “On an expanding market, pressure for diversification and for the increase in the quality of services will be weak without state intervention” (ARACIS 2011, p.15). Fourthly, that differentiation and diversity can only be introduced through new state legislation, new modes and types of classification, regulations and incentives. Together, these would operate through a more flexible set of quality indicators capable to ensure “multidimensional differentiation” [instead of the past practice of “using a fixed, simplified set of institutional categories as an instrument for policymaking” (idem, pp.94-95)] onto which a different, more fluid pattern of funding could then be superimposed. Fifthly, that classification would entail moving from the simple ranking of HE institutions against similar criteria towards constructing “dimensions of differentiation” through which HEIs can be grouped into classes according to how they score in each dimension (idem). Sixthly, that this classification requires strong differentiation between the dimension of research and that of teaching and learning, and that this should be reflected, in the Romanian case, by the legal classification of HEIs into research intensive universities (1st category), research and teaching universities (2nd category) and only teaching-focused universities (3rd category) (National Education Law, Chapter 7, Article 193, point 4). Seventhly, that while an ideology that can encompass any aspect of the HE system, the differentiation and diversity agenda focuses primarily on issues of strategic

management and organization at institutional level: “One striking characteristic of the Romanian higher education system is its homogeneity, or at least the existence of a powerful process of weakening the differences between State and public universities, between old and new ones, between large and small universities, between comprehensive and highly specialised universities. Their mission (as codified in the university Charters) is quasi-identical, their organisational structures, types of study programmes and their organisation, as well as content, procedures and practices related to teaching and research, the internal regulations are all similar (if not simply copied from one another) and at most incrementally different” (Miroiu and Vlăsceanu 2012, p.802). Eighthly and finally, that the process of quality assurance should therefore be primarily conceptualized (via the ‘fitness for purpose’ approach) as one of institutional evaluation in which the universities are legally required to provide mission statements, followed by a detailed process of self-evaluation comprised of two steps. The first step would require universities to present truthful statistical data about all their operations across several dimensions (teaching and learning, research, external relations and institutional capacity) and according to specific standards and sub-criteria, all in light of a detailed taxonomy provided by the government (Ordin 4072, 2011). Based on this, ARACIS and/or EUA (European University Association) would then be able to develop a set of quality indicators (through statistical modeling) that would function as the basis for the hierarchical ranking of universities and study programs, resulting into similarly differential funding. As for the second step, this would require universities to present and report (both in person and in writing) the strategic and operational plans they have derived from their own mission statements to a EUA team of external (and in fact, foreign) evaluators (IEP 2013).

It must be said here that the general criticism offered by literature in the field of HE on the notion of quality assurance also seems to apply to Romania's case, although the tendency has been to dispose of such observations with an optimistic attitude of policy implementation. As Harvey (2010, p.2) observes: "Unlike most academic disciplines that learn from accumulated knowledge and experience, quality assurance, it seems, systematically disavows all that has come before." This certainly seems to have been the case with Romania, where QA policy has been introduced as if no dimension of quality had previously existed in the HE system – particularly with regard to good teaching and learning or research practice. If, antecedently, quality had been "a matter for internal regulation by academics, who in turn took for granted what quality meant and that its sustenance was inherent in academic values and modes of organisation" (Kogan et al. 2006, p.94), should none of that matter anymore? "A sign of an ideology is its tendency to colonize all before it" also asserts Barnett (2003, p.91) before classifying 'quality' as a "pernicious ideology" because of it a) being imposed from above to deny the academic community space over quality affairs (p.92), b) lacking self-reflexivity in not being capable or willing to formulate and divulge the tacit idea of higher education which it endorses and continuously propagates (p.94), and c) not allowing for any due process, in terms of opening itself to "dialogical spaces" (p.96). As already presented, the micro-ideology of institutional differentiation and diversity permeates, via the National Education Law of 2011, the entire HE system, across all its statistically quantifiable dimensions. At the same time, this specific ideology is largely lacking a theoretical foundation and is not based on empirical studies. Similarly, this policy discourse lacks an assessment not only of the current state of the HE system (in a way the idea is that through the new QA system such a picture would eventually be captured), but also of

how actors and institutions might react to such reform. Here, an honest admission from Miroiu and Vlăsceanu (2012, p.806) concerning the overall proposed reform of the HE funding system in light of the agenda of ‘differentiation’ is exemplary: “How would the actors (universities, staff, and students) respond to this new set of (different) funding incentives? This is a question for the future. In the meantime, we are looking for a way to better specify and then implement the new funding mechanisms.” A similar approach is adopted by Vlăsceanu and Hâncean (2012), who, lacking any study or data about the possible response of actors to the policy model of ‘differentiation and diversity’, propose a competition between two predictive models, one of the desired external reform and one of the capacity of HEIs to act autonomously based on internal and informal structures. Their conclusion is simply that HEIs cannot resist the force of the state, with institutional differentiation being thus achieved despite any type of homogenization potentially being triggered via the same process: “In other words, the incentives brought forth by the Romanian reforms are so strong and diverse that they involve not only the top management of universities but also their operating cores. Even if HEIs respond in the same manner to the coercive isomorphism imposed by the state authorities responsible for higher education, they are institutionally differentiated using the same criteria.” Here, it must be mentioned, homogenization stands also for the two negative effects of “game-playing” or “compliance culture” (Barnett 2003, p.94; Harvey 2005, p.272) and “de-coupling” (of teaching and learning from the overall quality process and structures, or of teaching from research) which the quality assurance process can induce. When aware of such critiques, but even indirectly [see Miroiu and Vlăsceanu (2012) for examples of ‘game-playing’], these authors, however, tend to believe such problems

would be overcome in the new system [see, for example, Păunescu et al. (2012, pp.333-334), in relation to “de-coupling”].

Another aspect in which the differentiation/diversity policy discourse can be viewed as an ideology is in its somewhat hidden claim to power. As mentioned before, this discourse calls for direct state intervention and control of HE institutions, albeit under the justification of having to safeguard the diversity and quality of the system and through claims that such intervention would in fact increase the autonomy of HEIs. Thus, Morley (2003, p.VII) observes that inasmuch as “[q]uality procedures translate particular rationalities and moralities into new forms of governance and professional behaviour...quality is a political technology functioning as a regime and relay of power,” and Harvey (2010, p.8) wonders if the “centralised control that quality assurance enables” does not overtake all other considerations in importance. This is particularly worrying in the case of Romania for several reasons. Firstly and most importantly, because those advocating such a policy discourse and reform prefer to overlook the poor record of the Romanian government (and of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports) in terms of good governance. Secondly, because as Barnett (2003, p.92) observes “[i]n the ideology of quality, we have a nice example of the tensions between the state and civil society.” However, considering that Romanian NGOs and professional communities are already too weak and unable/unwilling to critically engage with the HE quality agenda, who will be able to keep the government accountable while its powers are on the increase? Furthermore, if the state lacks the institutional capacity and expertise required to presently run and implement such policies, who will benefit most and in what ways from the imposition of a Western and European policy model of this

kind? Last but not least, Morley's (2003, p.161) warning that "excessive regulation combined with low salaries is making the academy an unattractive career option" could begin to apply to Romania even more than before.

By far, however, the most potent criticism of QA, and this applies fully to the differentiation/diversity agenda, has been that it ignores "the intrinsic nature of the higher education enterprise" (Harvey 2010, pp. 2, 6), namely, the student experience and academics' cultures of professionalism. Having been borrowed from the business and industry sectors quality systems tell us how to improve bureaucracies but not the process of student learning (idem, p.6): "Quality monitoring focused on processes and systems rather than engaged with the learning experience of students" (Harvey 2005, p.273). The same transpires from the evaluation methodology that the new reform of HE proposes for assessing quality. The 2011 New Law of Education talks about two types of evaluation for classifying/ranking universities and their study programs. The yearly "primary evaluation" requires universities to present truthful statistical data about all their operations across several dimensions (teaching and learning, research, external relations and institutional capacity) and according to specific standards and sub-criteria, all in light of a detailed taxonomy provided by the government (Ordin 4072, 2011). On the other hand "institutional evaluation" occurs every four years and requires universities to present, both in person and in writing (a "self-evaluation report"), the strategic and operational plans they have derived from their own mission statements, to a EUA team of external (and in fact, foreign) evaluators (IEP 2013). Carried out by the European University Association's Institutional Evaluation Program, this type of evaluation involves different teams of five foreign EU experts (HE leaders, academics

and a student) visiting twice the same institution for a total of 5 days, on the basis of which a final decision is taken and presented into a report. The focus of the IEP is “on the institution as a whole rather than individual study programs or units” and the primary areas of concern are those of “decision making-processes...institutional structures and the effectiveness of strategic management” (IEP 2013, p.6). In terms of quality, the emphasis is on the internal processes of quality assurance and on how these inform decision-making and strategic management (idem). To conclude with, it is clear from the IEP guidelines presented to the Romanian HEIs that IEP is primarily concerned with issues of strategic management and with introducing a ‘culture of quality’ within these institutions. In terms of quality, the IEP focus is on policy and procedures set up for internal quality assurance and not on the actual quality of the learning experience, teaching, research, study programs or departments. In fact, whatever qualitative information is collected in this process depends entirely on what qualitative data the HEIs under scrutiny have chosen to include in their self-evaluation reports (p.10). The strange thing is that when scrutinized “primary evaluation” proves a form of ‘institutional evaluation’ as well, this time, not in terms of analysis of strategic management decision-making and planning, but in terms of an inventory of statistical data concerning the different resources (physical capital, human capital, student base, financial incoming streams, networking, and number and types of degrees offered, as well as number and types of publications and of funded projects) found at an institution’s disposal (Ordin 4072, 2011). Thus, under the criterion of “teaching and learning,” the sub-heading of “curriculum and specialization” (the only other sub-heading concerns “human resources”) is divided into these four categories:

- 1) “total number of accredited specializations by cycle of study (i.e., BA, MA, PhD), in each of the last 5 years (2005/06-2009/10)”
- 2) total number of graduates, counted separately for each of the five years
- 3) students enrolled into their first year, for each of the five years
- 4) number of graduates continuing their studies in the same institution, in each of the five years (idem).

What is definitely missing from this is an evaluation of curriculum development, and of the student learning experience and the quality of teaching. Even stranger is the fact that the same seems to apply to the evaluation for the hierarchical classification of programs of study (into five categories: A, B, C, D, and E).

On this matter the legislation is diverse and confusing, with ARACIS seemingly relying both on Law 87/2006, with its further additions such as HG 1418/2006 and OUG nr. 75/2011, and on the 2011 National Education Law, with its additions such as Ordin 4072/2011. The first legislative set enforces 3 main domains of quality assurance (institutional capacity, educational efficacy, and quality management) with their respective criteria, which differ considerably from the other set (teaching and learning, research, external relations, institutional capacity) particularly in terms of sub-criteria. Both sets have been designed to apply to the evaluations of institutions as a whole, but it can probably be assumed that ARACIS employs the first set in order to evaluate study programs (as no specific provisions for that exist in the second set) although not enough information regarding this type of evaluation exists in current legislation.

The 2011 National Education Law asserts that the rankings of universities and study programs is to be performed by an evaluative organism comprised of ARACIS, CNCS (National Research Council), CNATDCU (National Council for the Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates) and an international body selected by the Ministry of Education (in this case, the body in question is EUA – European University Association). The first evaluation of this kind is to be undertaken, however, by the external agency alone, namely, by EUA, but on the basis of a methodology (for ranking) provided still by the Ministry of Education. Considering that the methodology provided by the Ministry of Education (“Decree regarding the approval of the evaluation Methodology for the classification of universities and the hierarchical organization of study programs,” 2011), similarly to the 2011 NEL and Ordin 4072/2011, does not specify any clear criteria for the ranking of study programs, doubts are cast on how this process is and has actually taken place. Has the EUA ranked institutions and study programs solely on the methodology provided by the Ministry of Education and on the basis of the 2011 NEL? This would seem to be the case judging by the assertion of Vlăsceanu and Hâncean (2012, p.60) that “[s]tudy programme ranking has been mainly quantitatively oriented.” If this is so, then how has the EUA ranked study programs only based on institutional evaluation criteria that ignore the quality of learning/teaching etc.? Or has the EUA relied also on the legislation from 2006 and its continuation into 2011 under OUG nr. 75/2011, which at least has some minimal criteria in relation to assessment of teaching and learning? If this second part is the case, then that raises the question of how EUA, ARACIS and the Ministry of Education have employed different sets of conflicting standards and indicators to provide a unitary picture of the HE system in terms of the 2011 ranking of HEIs and study programs. However, even supposing that

a methodology derived from both sets of legislation has been used, and with the aid and sets of data from ARACIS, this still raises concerns. This is so because as Păunescu et al. (2012, p.324) have observed, 1) from 1993 until 2005 quality assurance has been considered synonymous with accreditation (of private institutions) which led to state-universities being almost never evaluated in 13 years and 2) the founding of ARACIS in 2005 did not discontinue the past practices of relying on “mostly input- and process-oriented” quality assurance indicators despite modified legislation (Miroiu and Andreescu 2010, p.99). On this second point, Păunescu et al. (2012, p.327) are most eloquent: “Another practice the ARACIS inherited, which also permeated its external evaluation methodology, was the focus on measuring and counting input resources instead of focusing on the outcomes of education, as the law stated. A recent study on the external evaluation methodology revealed, that, in fact, the input indicators are predominant in the new methodology while indicators measuring outputs or outcomes are missing. At this time the ARACIS is revising its evaluation methodology.”

The arguments presented above will suffice to conclude that Romanian HE, and particularly the QA and differentiation/diversity policy agenda of reform, does not generally produce qualitative assessments of the HE system at any level, does not generally produce assessments of the student learning experience and the quality of teaching, and tends to rely solely on forms of institutional evaluation via statistical data¹⁷, imposed forms of self-evaluation reporting and institutional visits for the ranking of universities and study programs (from which very differentiated funding patterns are

¹⁷ Finally, if the entire reform and assessment of the HE system relies primarily on statistical data from the NIS (National Institute of Statistics) and generally quantitative (and input-oriented) data provided by the universities themselves, another important question must also be asked: how descriptive, accurate and reliable are these sets of data by and on their own?

then derived). Is this a real commitment to reform or just another typical manner of ‘borrowing’ a Western model without creating any real changes in the deeper structure? Is the concern here with the reality of the HE system and identifying its current state (the present) or with implementing a borrowed policy vision (for the future) with the aim of claiming that Romania now has the same QA standards and QA mechanism with the rest of the EU? Is the real target of the current reform the HE system or the portrayal of a successful construction of a QA mechanism? As Barnett (2003, p.95) has observed, QA systems tend to be more concerned with achieving their own ideological aims by performing certain types of classifications, rather than with due process and doing justice to the evidence: “Impatience is built in this ideology: provided that there is an outcome that contributes to the inner intents of institutional comparison and which, at the same time, appears to render institutions transparent, and, thereby, accountable, this quality process will have realized its purpose.”

With this, my discussion of the main body of literature on Romanian HE, and of the Romanian HE sector, as being anchored primarily not in the reality of the present, but in a vision of reform associated with the adoption of policy-making models from the West, has almost come to an end.

The question, however, is if Romania is not unnecessarily adopting more extreme versions of the “differentiation and diversity” agenda than even the EU requires. It is clear that the entire policy discourse of quality and, particularly, the more recent one relating to the ‘diversification’ of HE, has been imported in Romania through the influence of European agencies or actors. There is no doubt that the EUA producing the 2011 ranking of Romanian HEIs and study programs (an earlier partner in policy-

making), relies heavily on the notions of institutional differentiation and diversification of the HE system, both in terms of vision and evaluative practice. Furthermore, the same can be said about the European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities and its president Frans van Vught, and more importantly, about the European Commission: “In a policy paper in 2005, the Commission identified several bottlenecks: a tendency to uniformity and egalitarianism in many national higher education systems, too much emphasis on mono-disciplinarity and traditional learning and learners, and too little world-class excellence (European Commission, 2005c). ... European higher education is also over-regulated and therefore inefficient and inflexible. ... In the view of the Commission, the quality and attractiveness of European universities need to increase, human resources need to be strengthened both in numbers and in quality, and the diversity of the European higher education system needs to be combined with increased compatibility” (Van Vught 2009, pp.7-8).

Reichert (2012, p.813) provides a perfect summary of the central location of this policy discourse on the European scene, highlighting, nonetheless, the fact that debates still surround it: “To put the current European higher education policy debates into perspective, it should be noted that the term ‘institutional diversity’ or ‘diversification’ is most often used rather restrictively, referring, first, only to external diversity, i.e. the divergent profiles of higher education institutions, rather than the diversity which institutions have to address within their institutional boundaries (internal diversity). Second, European diversity discussions most often refer to diversity of missions, which is understood to signify the varying institutional emphases on particular types of higher education activity, such as research, teaching, innovation or continuing education.

Curiously, other possible dimensions of mission and institutional identity are not discussed under the heading of mission diversity or mission stretch. Currently, the most prominent preoccupation with mission diversity concerns the intensity and form of research engagement as criteria for institutional differentiation. This concern has gained urgency in recent years with the rise of international rankings since the latter focus primarily on the measurable research activities which are registered in internationally accepted data sources (Hazelkorn 2008; Rauhvargers 2011). The mono-dimensionality of this research orientation has given rise to intense discussions, but has not yet led to more differentiated approaches to mission diversity (see also Chaps. 19 and 43 by Hazelkorn).”

The agenda is clearly one derived from the European project, but there is much difference between the softer version advocated by van Vught (and Netherlands), for example, and the “hard” approach taken by Sir John Taylor and the UK Research Councils (Vught and Ziegele 2012, p.16). One cannot but feel that, by classifying universities as research intensive, research and teaching, and only teaching focused universities (and by adjusting their funding accordingly) the Romanian government has gone much beyond what was being required by the European higher education agencies, following too closely, in fact, the more extreme policy agenda espoused by Taylor (2005, p.287): “In 1987, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) recommended that all higher education institutions should be graded R (research universities on the American model), X (institutions with selective research missions) or T (teaching-only institutions). These proposals were probably too radical ever to have any prospect of implementation.” Clearly, these proposals were not too radical for

Romania to implement, despite the fact that not the same can be said about other European countries or, indeed, about the UK itself. To this extent, therefore, it would seem that Romania can paradoxically be viewed as a testing-ground for Western models of policy-making not yet tried in their home countries.

Studies Aiming at the Actual State of the HE system

In the above, I have discussed how both literature and policy in the Romanian HE field tend to be directed towards a Western policy-model of future reform, without much care for past or present. Until now, this has been done through analysis of HE literature that deals with the Communist past, and with the implementation and set-up of a borrowed policy-program for future reform. At this point the focus will turn to few of the studies or texts that seem to be concerned primarily with the actual state of the HE system and of the society it frames: Neculau (1997), Miroiu et al. (1998), Stănciulescu (2002), Antohi (2004), Ferro (2004), Ginsburg et al. (2005), CUC (2009, 2010), Di Giacomo (2010), World Bank (2011).

Relying on Bourdieu, Neculau's essay (1997) discusses the notion of "academic field" in Romania's case, noting some of its transformations from the interwar period, through Communism and beyond, via the use of a small study (focus groups with students and interviews with faculty). Neculau (1997, p. 40) is noteworthy for emphasizing that universities' decline or progress depends on engagement with social context and life problems, and on speaking truth to power. He also observes that the centralized Romanian educational system reduces the role of the academic community to that of

maintaining internal quality standards by emphasizing certain moral and behavioural norms for social interaction (idem, p.39). The findings of his study (p.52), most of them reflections on the transition process, are still valid today, like, for example, the observation that when faced with reform, the university responds according to a model transmitted from professors to students: “The only effort is the one ‘for perpetuation, maintenance, stagnation.’ We could characterize this process as “a gradual adaptation, step by step’ without essentially affecting ‘the structures, habits, mentalities.’” Through the academic field, not change, but the model of “resistance to change” is being distributed into society (idem).

The exemplary Miroiu et al. (1998) is an integrative study that focuses on the state and reform of the Romanian education system as a whole, as judged against the needs of a society in transition (and particularly against poverty and social inequality of different specific forms). The study is unique not only in that it views the different parts of the educational system in relation to each other (primary education, secondary, tertiary etc.) amidst processes of reform, but because it combines data about educational institutions and social inequality with theorizing about the main features of the system, with an assessment of the current reform and an analysis of the management of the system, all resulting into a very strong and well organized critique of Romanian education (with precise recommendations at different levels of analysis). In large measure, its radiography of the educational system, and particularly its account of how this system fails the majority of its students, remains still valid and unmatched in kind today.

Stănciulescu (2002, pp. 9, 12) is, unlike most studies, a qualitative analysis (combining ethnomethodology with phenomenology) assessing the 90’s transition of the HEI

towards a more democratic model. Her book interprets the everyday experience of university life with the tools of sociological theory, resulting in abstract analyses about the logic of actors and institutions amidst processes of reform. This work is useful to any inquiry into how and why democratic reform processes are both partly accepted but also seriously undermined by actors and institutions in a post-communist HE system. Instead of viewing the failures of transition as caused by the resistance of the traditional and stagnant masses to the civilizing and modernizing elites, Stănciulescu (idem, p.38) proposes, thus, a different model: “Is it not more pertinent and more profitable to ask ourselves whether, beyond desires and appearances, there is not a split between political strategies and discourses, on the one side, and the practical logics of common actors, whatever their social condition may be, on the other?” Her analyses reveal that too often the social actors of the typical HEI prefer to rely on the sphere of personal relationships and on a specific morality associated with culture and tradition, rather than on universal and neutral norms that should apply equally to all (p.35), and which are associated with the rule of law, formal institutions and meritocracy (or performance criteria). She also warns that in some cases the government itself is ready to alter statistics and reports just to give the appearance that certain borrowed norms have been implemented successfully, without much care for actual effects in practice. Thus, instead of a “regulatory, reflexive mechanism,” the rule of law tends thus to act predominantly as a “structure with a dominant demonstrative function” (p.86).

Antoși (2004) is simply a personal reflection, from a cultural perspective, on the challenges and responses of students and faculty members in conditions of chronic underfunding of the Romanian HE system. The essay (p.342) discusses the social,

cultural and intellectual challenges of students moving abroad, noting that the academic discourses produced about Romania come mostly from outside the country (the West), and that the typical ones from within are too “indigenous, fragmented and heterogeneous” to ever grow and connect with the larger international discourses. Nevertheless, Antoși (p.336) trusts that Romania’s emerging academics can steer clear of both extremes: “Thus, something I have called ‘The Third Discourse,’ a fusion of local and international discourses situated at a critical distance from both autochthonism (with its specific Romanian expression, “protochronism”) and Westernization (with its local hybrid, imitation, and its *reductio ad absurdum* political correctness), is being proposed by an increasing, although still limited number of authors.”

Ferro’s (2004) study of highly skilled labour migrations from Romania to the West (a topic which, strangely, the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore for decades) is one of the first of its kind of a qualitative nature. Her online survey (p.22) has the merit of investigating the personal experience of highly skilled migrants found in diverse locations (mostly in the West) on a variety of topics: “the most leading reasons of their moving, the difficulties that skilled workers encountered, the likelihood of a return in Romania, the transnational commitment and belonging, and an evaluation of their brain drain experience.”

Insofar as I am aware, Ginsburg et al. (2005) is the only journal article to 1) look at Romanian’s HE system in relation to the activities of the World Bank, IMF and WTO (or in relation to any of them) and 2) to compare the Romanian HE system with another HE system in a qualitative manner (that of Chile, in this case). In short, the conclusion is that, in both countries, the policies of the World Bank and IMF have “positioned very

effectively these systems to be governed by the rules of the GATS/WTO” via policies introducing the “privatisation, domestic marketization and international commercialization of higher education” (p.231). Aside from its main argument and comparative focus the article is of importance because it touches on the essential and continuous role played by the World Bank in the formulation of post-communist Romanian HE policy: “The Romanian government’s initiatives to privatise, marketise and commercialize the system of higher education were undertaken in the context of- perhaps in anticipation of and certainly reinforced by – the policy recommendations of the World Bank and the structural and stabilisation program conditionalities of the World Bank and IMF, respectively” (p.230).

In 2007, at the initiative of SAR (Romanian Academic Society) 14 NGOs united to form the Coalition for Clean Universities as a mechanism for making universities accountable to students and civil society. This resulted into a research methodology that assessed the ‘integrity’ of all the public HEIs according to criteria belonging to four dimensions (“transparency and administrative fairness, “academic fairness,” “governance quality,” “financial management practices”) allowing for the hierarchical ranking of universities in 2008 and again in 2009-2010. With an ingenious methodology that relied on never enforced legislation regarding the transparency of HEIs and standards of governance and finance, on interviews with students and staff, assessment of number of ISI publications, investigative journalism and even legal cases, the CUC studies (2009, 2010) repeatedly found widespread instances of plagiarism and nepotism, lack of transparency in terms of administrative/academic (staffing, promotions, performance, etc.) and financial decision-making (budgets, pay increases, public acquisitions, individual asset declarations etc.)

and a failure to evaluate students in a meaningful way. The CUC initiative produced vehement reactions from ARACIS and the Ministry of Education (who had not yet produced any official ranking of Romanian public universities at the time and who generally tend to present a more favorable view of the quality of the HE sector), but over time the impact of CUC over the government (see the changes regarding nepotism in the 2011 NEL) and the Romanian HEIs has probably been quite significant. Whatever the case, the CUC initiative stands unique in that it combines educational research with a civic responsibility to hold institutions accountable to their service of the ordinary individual (almost in the manner of the ‘parallel polis’ described by Vaclav Havel), and because it is the only study of scale (no matter how imperfect) seeking to capture the real present state of the Romanian HE system.

Di Giacomo (2010) represents an ambitious PhD dissertation attempting to conceptualize the transition process of the entire Romanian education system (towards forms of democracy) via a theoretical outlook that combines notions such as colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. Of particular interest here are the findings of his 2009 interviews with 11 elite members of the Romanian HE sector (from former Ministers of Education and other high-ranking officials in the Ministry of Education, to researchers, professors, CEOs of educational agencies and UN officials) (pp.109-110). Noteworthy amongst them is the theme of isomorphism¹⁸ and the notion that the education system is moving from a pre-Communist French model towards a more Anglo-Saxon one (pp.132, 187). The overwhelming consensus amongst his respondents

¹⁸ “In the case of Romania, isomorphism manifests itself primarily as EU policy and a tendency to mimic aspects of key Western education systems, which created positive, negative and ambiguous effects in Romania” (Di Giacomo 2010, p.53).

is that the influence of exogenous institutions (such as the World Bank, IMF, USAID, the EU and OSI – Open Society Institute) has been both key and “positive and even inspirational” in kick-starting and maintaining the reform of the education system (p.181), even if at times lacking systemic coherence: “Interviewee Mona believed that exogenous, i.e., international organizations were the catalyst for most if not all reform efforts: Romanian reforms [are] donor driven, [by] OSI, WB [and] EU. [The] EU is [a] major one because give the most money but problem of coherence because each entity has different ideology and goals. EU wants de-centralization and partnerships. WB wants accountability and structures. OSI focus on partnerships between institutions” (p.162). Di Giacomo (p.190) reads this tendency to view exogenous influence and actors in such a positive light as the manifestation of a colonial mentality. To him, the readiness to accept any suggested reform even before scrutinizing its impact and ways of implementation highlights Romania’s need for developing its own “frame of reference (p.197).” It also points to a resistant tendency to reduce the process of reform to that of paying “lip-service” only (p.196). To conclude with, Di Giacomo (p.63) finds isomorphism in Romania mostly a positive force, but only because of the country lacking a trained and experienced elite that could envision, lead and implement reform. Unfortunately, studies aiming to assess the influence of any of the exogenous institutions mentioned above on the Romanian educational (or HE) system have yet to be produced.

The World Bank’s Functional Review of the Romanian Higher Education Sector (2011) is a report that fits in many ways with the literature focused on the ‘differentiation and diversity’ agenda and which is generally concerned with a model of policy-making for future reform. Nevertheless, I have chosen to list it in this section because of its capacity

to provide a comprehensive and well-informed assessment of the main challenges in the Romanian HE sector (although, some of its suggested solutions, particularly when moving from administrative/managerial issues into the inner processes of teaching/learning/research and assessment of such aspects, are at least debatable¹⁹). In my opinion, the review's estimations are critical in at least three aspects. Firstly, a clear warning is issued in relation to the lack of assessment of the student learning experience, and this can be seen to apply both to the QA frameworks of ARACIS and to the newly devised one for the ranking of universities and study programs in the National Education Law of 2011:

“Most critically, there are no objective data on how much students learn during the course of their study. As such, it is impossible to take stock on where the Romanian higher education sector is in 2011, and provide guidance on how far it has improved (or regressed) in recent years. This is not to say that data are not available. Data are available on how many students (out of a particular age cohort) enroll and how many of them graduate. Data are also available on their socio-economic characteristics (using household survey data) and what they study. All of these data are analyzed below. However, it is important to remember that the study of enrollments and number of graduates is, ultimately, the study of how many diplomas are issued, not the study of the skills and competencies the sector produces” (World Bank 2011, p.32). Secondly, the report exposes the massive lack of expertise in the implementing organisms of the

¹⁹ The suggestion/directive that the assessment of student learning in Romanian HE should develop via standardized tests assessing specific sets of broad competences developed by specialists in each field (based on the newly forming National Qualifications Framework) and that such a system would allow for differentiating (with a view to adjusting funding) between different institutions and also between the private and the state HE sectors based on broad criteria such as “analytical reasoning skills,” “critical thinking skills,” and “communication skills” is simply laughable (see table and discussion in World Bank 2011, p.44).

Ministry of Education, and the need to rely almost exclusively on foreign specialists.

The situation is so critical that the review complains about the shortage of internal staff having to coordinate these outside resources: “The second constraining factor has to do with the number of full time staff available to the intermediary organizations either internally or within the Ministry. ...A very small number of internal staff is operating a force of external experts that runs into the hundreds and thousands” (p.13). Thirdly, the report documents a lack of management and planning capacity at the highest levels of the Ministry of Education (for example, the lack of a strategy for ‘internationalization’ or the assignment of workloads that exceed by far the institutional capacities of the implementing organisms) and a discretionary (and non-transparent) use of public funds in the manner in which HEIs receive their core funding and capital expenditure budget (p.92).

Conclusions on the State of the HE Field

With this last example my review of the literature on the Romanian HE system, and in a sense, of the nature of the field of Romanian HE, has come to an end. This exercise has shown that very little research has been produced about the communist period of the HE system or about the real state of the HE system during the decades after 1989 (the recent present), with most contributions focusing on the adoption (and implementation) of a program of reform for the future constructed via Western models, aid and expertise. The strong “isomorphism” that can be viewed as a key factor in this seems to involve the interplay of both long-tem cultural factors (such as an extremely positive or optimistic

view of the West as the source and agent of development and modernization) and the presumed more medium-term lack of capacity (both institutional and in terms of human resources) and expertise. If the name of the game is to constantly play catch-up with the latest policy-models and trends in the West, and Romania lacks the capacity for doing so critically, it is no surprise that Romanian HE would surrender the initiative in policy-making to exogenous actors, viewing such influence uncritically and in very positive terms. The real worry, however, is that the Romanian HE sector would not have developed even this type of policy-making and accompanying research literature without the influence of such exogenous actors.

Romanian HE: A Challenging Research Agenda

In such conditions, a realistic assessment of the current state of the Romanian HE system in relation to the needs of society cannot be undertaken today and could not have been undertaken back in 2006, at least not single-handedly. Simply put, the body of research and the educational data required for understanding the inner processes and configuration of the Romanian HE system had not (and have not) yet been constituted. To constitute this data and body of literature is to reconstruct the entire field of Romanian HE. The distance is that from statistical sets of external data to meaningful interpretation of inner processes (how the system actually works and what it does) and their correlation to social reality. The same can be said about the concrete educational needs of society, which still remain to be determined beyond the realm of borrowed ideology or general policy visions. It is for these reasons, therefore, that this PhD

research project found its original intention of assessing the current HE system against an evaluation of the current needs of society too daunting to pursue. An X-ray of the HE system in transition could have been achieved only to the level of recapitulating the successive development of policy legislation (sometimes itself confounding and excessive), but without being able to assess the level of implementation. This would have effectively reduced the HE system to a simulacrum, namely, to the reality of a social system being entirely substituted by the vision of change supported by a policy model, with no differentiation between the two. Unfortunately, as can be discerned from the type of research literature produced so far, this already constitutes a main trend in the field of Romanian HE. Too often the HE system gets represented as the historical succession of regulations and legislative action imposed upon it, (and/or as the philosophical vision entertained by some borrowed policy-model), as if this was the reality of the system. Not differentiating between the two has given policy-making and legislation an appearance of rightfulness, objectivity and inevitability. This is highly undemocratic and also threatens the process of reform because of not allowing it a feedback mechanism.

A second option would have been to produce a representation of the HE system in transition not in terms of the state of the system and its features, but in terms of the meanings of transition and resulting policy-models vying to shape the HE agenda in Romania. This would have required the research project to slide slightly more towards policy discourses than educational ones. However, with the high isomorphism displayed by the Romanian HE system, debate between different policy-models and meanings of

transition has not occurred at all, at least not in the public domain or in the literature of the field. Hence, this avenue could not be pursued either.

At this point, still true to the vision of relating the HE system to the state of a society in transition, the PhD project took a significant detour.

From Educational Discourses to Policy Discourses on Transition

The research project became concerned with a) assessing the impact of the Communist legacy on the present state and needs of society, and with b) identifying what meaningful debates about the meaning of transition (and/or about competing policy models) existed in society. The final aim was to relate the findings (about the ‘point of departure,’ the ‘point of arrival’ and the current reality of transition) with whatever could be known about the current state of the HE system and the policies pursued regarding it.

The second direction signified a move from educational discourses towards policy discourses, i.e., notions of transition or policy models from disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics, and the field of development (World Bank, UNDP, USAID, Open Society Institute). However the general impression derived from this, and here particularities apply to each field (Gheorghiu 2005, Aligică 2002, Barbu 2002, Larionescu 2002), was that these disciplines tended to accept and promote the neo-liberal models of transition as readily, and sometimes as uncritically, as the HE field: “So far, the revolution as a path to democracy has been conceived in an oversimplified manner that fails to capture its full meaning for the social sciences. Hitherto, more detailed issues of political transition and democratization are so far

scarcely identified, let alone addressed” (Barbu 2002i, p.287).²⁰ This could be ascribed to the fact that, as is the case with sociology, most of these fields have lacked a Marxist or significantly Leftist orientation: “The image of major theoretical orientations, presented before, reveals the absence of Marxism as a paradigm of contemporary Romanian sociology. The few exceptions presented, in which Marxist references are implicit or associated with other interpretations do not fundamentally change the situation” (Larionescu 2007, pp.116-117). Mihăilescu’s (2010, pp.186-187) joking remark that the post-1989 transition had been largely conceptualized as an off-the road return to the high-way of progress and civilization is, therefore, quite telling: “Once the belief in the existence of the highway was widely shared, everything became purely a technical problem and, eventually, of time: the team of technicians drew ‘drivers’ log books’ which we, at the wheel of transition, had to follow carefully pressing to the ground the acceleration pedal. ...Thus ‘transition’ had been imagined and lived as a win-win process, legitimizing both categories of actors engaged in the race: the confirmation of a superior ‘know-how’ on behalf of the Western ‘technicians’ and the ardent desire of the Eastern ‘pilots’ to drink the champagne cup waiting for them at the finish line.” This is not to say that these disciplines did not attempt to engage with aspects and meanings of the transition process, at times even issuing alarming assessments of the present reality (particularly poverty, marginalization, bad governance and corruption). But this has been done so largely without any substantial critique of the current neo-liberal model [Pasti’s variant of political sociology (1995 and 2006) and the uninterrupted economic columns of Ilie Șerbănescu are an exception here, but their Marxist positions are

²⁰ An illustrative example from the field of political science is the recent CRPE (Romanian Centre for European Policies) report (Giosan 2013) about making Romanian politics more democratic. For a critique of its suggestions see Barbu (2013).

generally considered unconventional and extreme] and without the offering of alternative policy models²¹. The assumption, thus, has largely been that “the failure is not of the ‘transition’ but of the way in which some have put it into practice” (Mihăilescu 2010, p.190). Only more recently, there has been a theoretical acknowledgment that Romania must find its own way and “make its own choices” regarding the mode of its integration into the European structures and society (idem, p.195; Pasti 2006, p.27; Dăianu 2006, pp.25, 27, 399-411). However, as Mihăilescu (2010, p.195) remarks: “Romania does not have yet a project for the country.”²²

What is more (and this reveals their uncertain, inchoate, pre-paradigmatic character²³), disciplines such as sociology and political science have been caught up in producing either generalist/theoretical essay-like literature (see, for example, Zamfir 2004; Vlăsceanu 2001; Pasti 1995, 2006; Barbu 2004) at times primarily cultural/historical or philosophical in orientation (see for example, Miroiu 1999; Barbu 2001, 2005), or extremely empiricist technical accounts (see, for example, Sandu 1999; Mungiu-Pippidi 2002). On the other hand, domains like economics (see for example, Georgescu 2002 and Dăianu 2004, 2006) and the field of development [see, for example The World Bank (1997, 2002) and the noteworthy National Human Development Reports for Romania by UNDP (2001, 2002, 2005, 2007)] have been almost entirely concerned with ways of

²¹ This is the main critique Vlăsceanu (2001, p.85) brings to the highly critical “Romania – Matter of Facts” report [Pasti et al. (1997)], probably as important and unique a report in the field of sociology as “Învățământul Românesc Azi” (“Romanian Education Today”) [Miroiu et al. (1998)] has been in the field of education.

²² To the extent of Romania having formulated its own nation-wide policy strategy Mihăilescu seems to be absolutely right in his statement. This is not to overlook, however, the agreements from 2009-2010 with the European Commission, IMF and the World Bank resulting in the instrument for the national implementation of the Europa 2020 Strategy: the National Reform Program 2011-2013.

²³ Here, the assessment of Mungiu-Pippidi (2002, p.2) still rings true in some respects: “The world of our social sciences, although holding inside it talented or educated people, is a chimera at the moment, not even a project, for this would imply a will of transformation at work somewhere.”

implementing neo-liberal models of reform.²⁴ Not surprisingly, Aligică (2002, pp.159-160) discusses, for example, how the new “core theoretical and methodological orientations” in the post-1989 field of economics have been those of “a free market, monetarist, Chicago school approach” (more recently challenged by “an eclectic, neo-Keynesian approach”), of the perspective developed by Austrian School of Economics and of the neo-institutionalism strand supported by the World Bank.

In conclusion, neither of these disciplines seemed, at least not in 2006, to offer a meaningful debate about policy models and the trajectory of transition. Even when critical accounts of aspects of present reality surfaced, these were not formulated well-enough to amount to an alternative model, and/or were simply not engaged with properly because of the internal disorganization of their own discipline and the lack of political will. More importantly, the generalist, essay-like nature of such interventions also ensured that, at the level of critique, these disciplines tended to slide ever further away from the policy realm into the realm of cultural discourses.

²⁴ An interesting critique was offered by the Marxist-oriented economist Ilie Serbănescu but his ideas were mostly scattered in articles on specific and immediate economic issues and never gathered together into a book that would imply a more defined and integrated perspective. The same can, in fact, be said about the publications of neo-Keynesian Dăianu (2009, pp.110-111), who, while generally supportive of the measures of reform and the policy models behind them, is also careful to emphasize the dangerous and unethical side of capitalism. As it happens, I fully agree with Antohi (2006) that Serbănescu and Dăianu are some of the most important public voices on the Romanian economy in the post-communist period, and at some point, a comparison of their specific analyses was even considered a subtheme for this research project.

From Policy Discourses to Cultural Discourses on Transition

The slide into cultural discourses was even more prominent in the case of the first direction of research concerning an evaluation of the legacy of Communism. Initially, this can be attributed to three reasons: the fact that Communism brought about not only a different kind of society but also a different cultural project or civilization, the fact that many of the analysts of the Communist past (see, for example, Stelian Tănase, Marius Oprea, Cristina Vatulescu, Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, Mircea Martin, Eugen Negrici, Ana Selejan, Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, Ruxandra Cesereanu, Alex Goldiș, Alexandru Matei, Alexandra Tomița, Ioana Macrea-Toma, Lucia Dragomir, Stefan Borbély, Ion Simuț, Sanda Cordoș, etc.) had first emerged or still operate from within the literary field²⁵, and the fact that the evaluation of the legacy of Communism was occurring in a politicized context, marked by the intellectual discourse or cultural ideology of ‘anti-communism.’

Both directions of study, then, pushed the research project from a concern with policy-making and concrete evaluations of social reality towards the realm of cultural discourses and competing cultural models. At a deeper level, however, this change of focus must be attributed to the literary-centeredness of Romanian culture, which as observed by Patapievici (2007, pp. 95, 182-183 specifically) and others (Negrici 2008, pp.27-28; Buduca 2004; Mușina 2006, pp.201-205; Flonta 2010, p.106; Tănăsoiu 2004, p.94; Cernat 2010v Logica resentimentului sau închiderea minții, para.2, Lefter 2012,

²⁵ It is interesting to note here that from the initial list of 19 members of the 2006 “Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania” 8 members are or have been primarily affiliated with the literary field (Alexandrescu, Goma, Ierunca, Lovinescu, Manolescu, Oprea, Rusan, Tănase) while one is more a cultural theorist rather than a historian (Antoși) and another an essayist on matters of culture and a writer (Patapievici).

p.203) continues to dominate and severely impact on the nature of academic disciplines and specializations. From this point onward, and initially without even realizing it, the research project slid into the realm of cultural theory, however, via an integrative and trans-disciplinary approach. Unexpectedly, a specific hypothesis and research question emerged from the strand of literature evaluating the legacy of Communism (Crowther 1988; Deletant 1997, 1998; Tănase 1998; Tismăneanu 1997, 1999, 2003; Tismăneanu and Antohi 2006; Verdery 1998; Martin 2002ii, 2002iii, 2002iv, 2003, 2003i; Boia 1999, 2005; Cesereanu 2004; Kolakowski 2005; Schopflin 1993; Gleason 1995; Chen 2007; Tomiță 2007; Kotkin 1997; Apor et al. 2004; Pollock 2006; Jowitt 2000; Gavrilă 2004; Cernat et al. 2004; Cernat et al. 2004i), and this was adopted as the main line of inquiry for this PhD project.

Identifying the Research Question

Initially, what transpired was an understanding that a certain humanistic discourse was central both to the main official Communist ideology²⁶ and to some of its niche discourses and more marginal cultural productions. From this point, two further developments led directly to the emergence of the research question. Firstly, beyond the notion of a humanistic discourse, the readings from the collaborative project (Cernat et al. 2004) entitled “Explorări în Comunismul Românesc, Vol. I-II” (“Explorations in Romanian Communism, Vol. I-II”) seemed to reveal the existence of a specific humanistic device, which I have entitled the hero-mirror mechanism. Secondly, this

²⁶ This research direction was in fact pursued, also under the inspiration of Foucault, by Gavrilă (2004).

mechanism appeared to apply not only to discourses that had been marginal or niche during Communism (and then forgotten in post-communism), but also to publicly-influential cultural discourses seemingly resistant or opposed to the official ideology. The same also seemed to apply to the re-emergence or continuation of these discourses after 1989.

Finally, this led to the research question of a cultural device acting as a governing mechanism central to the period of Ceaușist Communism (and, possibly, the entire Communist period) both in terms of the official ideology and of resistant discourses. The existence of such a mechanism was then launched as a hypothesis to be investigated in three ways, the order of which gives the dissertation its structure. Firstly, an inductive investigation of different texts from “Explorări în Comunismul Românesc, Vol. I-II,” led to the formulation of the hero-mirror mechanism as a hypothesis. Secondly, in the search for the origin of this mechanism in Communist Romanian culture, this hypothesis was tested and shown to apply to Platonic thought, to the key ontological concepts of some of the main religions, at different levels of Russian Communist culture (in the everyday functioning of the society of the new man, at the level of political and philosophical theory or core official ideology, and as the official art discourse of socialist realism), and in certain strands of pre-Stalinist Russian culture (the Russian avant-garde, Solov’ev and the school of Sophiology, 19th century radical fiction and the medieval texts documenting the life of a saint). Thirdly, the testing of the hypothesis (and in a sense, the inductive investigation) was expanded from marginal and forgotten cultural productions to cultural discourses highly influential in the public domain during and after Communism. This third part, i.e., the analysis of cultural discourses, also conceptualized

as both intellectual and identity discourses, was used then to frame the main body of the dissertation and develop its conclusions. Finally, in drawing the conclusion three dimensions were observed: a sort of deconstruction of Romanian identity and its main cultural mechanisms/models (with implications for Romanian HE policy-making), the educational role ascribed to the public space in relation to the HE system, both in terms of elite intellectual formation and the education of the masses (with implications for the reform of the HE system), and the very contested issue of “resistance” during Communism (with the provision of an alternative taxonomy).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This section simultaneously combines a discussion of the theoretical and comparative perspectives that specifically inform this project together with a delineation of the methodologies employed as part of the study.

The idea that Communist culture has made extensive use of the notion of the hero is nothing new. Communism, it is widely accepted, had produced the heroization of culture, science, leader, and of the nation. However, few efforts have been made to date to uncover the underlying mechanism or logic for such occurrences otherwise widely documented. Most attempts have seen the issue dutifully noted and classified as part of a larger interpretative paradigm or notion such as ‘totalitarianism,’ ‘dictatorship,’ ‘utopianism,’ ‘cult of the leader,’ ‘ideological control,’ etc., essentially without further light being shed on the issue.

That any hero’s journey has similar stages in every culture has been argued relatively successfully by Joseph Campbell. As Campbell (1949, pp.28-37) sees it, however, the purpose of such mythical stories and archetypes is to testify to the existence of some divine source on which our life here depends (transcendence). The ‘monomyth’ is, thus, nothing but a story in which the hero eventually manages to reconnect with such a divine source (thus, also finding himself) in order to rejuvenate his whole community (idem). The simple question, then, is why would the Communist system produce and appropriate countless stories of this kind and insist that everyone internalize and identify with at

least a certain considerable number of them? Moreover, why would the elites internalize similar models of the story themselves, suggesting that the notion of the hero is somehow also ingrained in the unconscious of the system and its elites?

Only later in my PhD project I became aware of works concerned with Russian ‘socialist realism’ that specifically looked at the issue. If seen from the perspective of the question of the hero or socialist realism, this PhD thesis can be considered, thus, to generally fall within the tradition represented by Clark (1981), Groys (1992) and Gutkin (1999), although without this having counted as an initial source of inspiration. As discussed at length in the chapter entitled “The Mirror Mechanism of the Hero: Its Discursive Matrix,” from these works, only Clark (1981) provides an in-depth analysis of the issue of socialist realism and the models of the hero, and, on these lines of inquiry, it is her work that this thesis has come to resemble most. In short, it could be said that this work sets out to achieve what Clark (1981) has done for socialist realism, only in the realm of cultural discourses. Having said that, analysis of cultural discourses is very different from narrative plot-analysis in novels (although some cultural theorists could argue that both mediums can be similarly seen as ‘texts’), and, despite their parallelism, the same applies to the two types of structures identified as findings: the “master-plot” vs. the hero-mirror mechanism. In these two fundamental aspects, therefore, this project essentially diverges from Clark’s (1981).

For, if seen from the perspective of cultural discourses, this dissertation resembles, has its clear origin in, and continues the analyses of Romanian Communist culture

performed by Cernat et al. (2004), Gavrilă (2004), Verdery (1991) and Martin (2002ii, 2002iii, 2002iv, 2003, 2003i), occupying a space in-between.²⁷ As noted before, the hero-mirror mechanism emerged, via an inductive method, from the analyses of marginal, niche or forgotten Communist cultural products performed by Cernat et al. (2004). Verdery (1991) views Romanian Communist official ideology as the result of a battle won by the discourse of the nation over the discourse of Marxism. In a direct critique of Verdery (1991), Martin (2003, Nationalist sau comunist?, para. 10) argues that Ceaușescu's objective was "the communization of the nation, not the nationalization of Communism or the indigenization of Marxism." This PhD thesis follows this linkage between official ideology and main cultural discourses but in a significantly different manner. Firstly, via the humanistic device of the mirror-mechanism, a third discourse, of socialist humanism, is posited as a hybrid form between discourses such as humanism, Marxism-Leninism and nationalism. In particular, the period of Ceaușescu's rule is then equated with the centrality of this discourse, also viewed as the main official ideology. Gavrilă (2004) fits in well here, because of his analysis of 'socialist humanism' as an official policy-discourse of the Ceaușescu regime. Secondly, the PhD thesis mediates between the larger discourses of the nation and Marxism, and the more niche Communist cultural products analyzed by Cernat et al. (2004) by proposing an intermediate but related unit of analysis: popular and influential cultural discourses of the Ceaușist period as tested against the humanistic device of the hero-mirror mechanism (namely, against the main official ideology).

²⁷ Another indirect but essential source for this whole dissertation particularly in relation to "the figure of the hero" (Matei 2011, p.31) and the notion of 'cultural resistance' (and one also unacknowledged by many of the secondary sources used in this project) have been the writings of Caius Dobrescu (1998, 2001, 2010), who despite his literary career, represents in my opinion, the most significant representative of the field of 'cultural studies' in Romania.

At this point, it becomes difficult to continue discussing the other theoretical and comparative perspectives informing this work without engaging the issue of methodology and, particularly, of the notion of cultural discourses being employed. As highlighted at the end of the Literature Review chapter, the methodology used consists of three separate parts, mirroring three different sections, or phases, in the project.

Methodological Considerations: Positing the Hypothesis of the Mirror-Mechanism

The first part relies on an inductive approach, via which the model of the hero-mirror mechanism with its two axes [1) ‘the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself’ and 2) ‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good’] is derived or rather abstracted from different texts in Cernat et al. (2004) highlighting either or both of the two axes. At this level, this inductive methodology resembles that of Clark (1981) except that instead of analyzing the plots of different novels to derive a master-plot, the focus here is more on how ‘typical’ characters are being constructed in different cultural productions. As can be witnessed, this type of narrative analysis and its findings constitute the first part of the chapter entitled “The Mirror-Mechanism of the Hero: Its Discursive Matrix.”

Methodological Considerations: the Roots and Origin of the Mirror-Mechanism

In the second section of the thesis, concerned with identifying the origin of the mirror-mechanism in Romanian Communist culture, the methodology can be said to loosely resemble that of the history of ideas advocated by Arthur O. Lovejoy (see Mandelbaum 1965). While the hero-mirror mechanism is employed, in Lovejoy's fashion, as a specific "unit-idea," this thesis falls short of the standards set out in works such as "The Great Chain of Being," where the role played by such 'unit-ideas' in different systems of thought is accounted for in terms of historical causality and continuity. Such a comprehensive inquiry lies outside the scope of this thesis and the powers of its author. The aim here is simply to make an argument for the existence of a notion such as the hero-mirror mechanism by illustrating its different historical contexts of appearance that could be relevant to Romanian Communist culture. The simple methodology employed has been to follow the chains of association which different works relevant to the theme of the mirror-mechanism have set up from one to another and across cultural contexts. Key here has been the assumption that the centrality of the mirror-mechanism should be traced, as many other cultural and policy features of the Communist period have been²⁸, to Russian Communist culture. Initially, this has led, for example, to works such as Kolakowski (2005), Jowitt (2000) and Pollock (2006), which confirm the notion at the level of Leninist and Stalinist Communist ideology, and to that of Kotkin (1997), which does the same in relation to Stalinist material culture. Additionally, the theme of cultural policy has led to works such as Clark (1981), Groys (1992) and Gutkin (1999) whose

²⁸ A very interesting discussion of this kind occurs in Kligman and Verdery (2011) concerning the collectivization of agriculture in Romania based on the Soviet blueprint.

analyses of socialist realism clearly reflect the notion of the mirror-mechanism, but which also highlight the role of Platonic theory, of the Russian avant-garde, of radical Russian literature, of Solov'ev's philosophy, and of medieval hagiographies. From here on, by following the link to Solov'ev (Smith 2011), for example, the notion of the mirror-mechanism was further traced back to the school of Sophiology and to Orthodox Christianity, which, in turn, led to a further inquiry into other religions. Eventually, this led to the conviction that, due to the fact that this is where the hero-mirror mechanism can be found in its most theoretically developed and clearly specified form, this cultural device most probably has its origins in religion. Nonetheless, it must be said here that the methodology employed cannot account for a relationship of historical causality between any of the different contexts within which the notion of the mirror-mechanism has been traced. In Mandelbaum's (1965, p.38) terms, this thesis cannot eventually demonstrate that the mirror-mechanism should be viewed more as a "continuing idea" (where a "direct historical connection" can be established between different contexts) than a "recurrent" one (which can occur at different times and in different contexts without any link of causality). This project, therefore, can only offer "historical parallels" where the aim would have been to "establish historical connections" (p.41). Nevertheless, as Mandelbaum (p.40) observes, "the importance of a preliminary logic analysis of unit-ideas" (here Mandelbaum distinguishes between logical connections based on similarity as opposed to historical connections based on causality), is that it can lead to "often immensely valuable" hypotheses. As the purpose of this thesis is to put forward a credible hypothesis, such an outcome would more than suffice its aims.

Methodological Considerations: Analysis of Cultural Discourses

Finally, the methodology employed in the third part of the dissertation involves the analysis of cultural discourses. At this point, it becomes important to discuss how the notion of cultural discourse has been employed in this dissertation. There is no doubt that this PhD dissertation leans heavily on the superstructure side of the famous base/superstructure Marxist dichotomy (Williams 1973). To a considerable degree this has been caused by the successive distortions imposed upon the original research agenda of the project by the state of different Romanian academic fields and, particularly, of the HE field, in the years before and until 2006-2007. Such matters and the constraining influence of the literary-centeredness of Romanian culture on academic disciplines, and over this thesis, have been carefully presented in the Literature Review chapter and will not be reviewed here. To this extent, emphasizing culture and consciousness over the actual material processes and the economical and political realities of transition has indeed been an effect imposed on the author. However, inasmuch as other options have always existed (in terms of deviating from or severely minimizing the original research agenda) the current direction of this research project cannot be fully ascribed only to such constraints. If, forced into the field of culture, the author has chosen to engage with such terrain, it is also because prior or as part of this process he had come to develop an inclination for epistemological issues. It is from such an epistemological perspective, and here I would particularly refer to Foucault [see Hearn's (2012, p.84) discussion of why Foucault's study of power falls under the umbrella of "epistemological approaches"], that the author approaches the notion of discourse. By viewing discourses as "bodies of knowledge" (McHoul and Grace 2002, p.26) this project, therefore, departs

significantly from the fields of cultural studies and critical discursive analysis (Fairclough 2003; Van Dijk 2006, 2008) and from domains such as structuralism, sociolinguistics and semiotics, which tend to conceptualize discourses as language, signs and texts. There are arguments to be made for classifying this project as “structuralism in the broadest sense” [see Sturrock’s (2003, pp.22-23) distinction between “structuralism” and “Structuralism”], or as relating to the field of cultural studies,²⁹ or to the critical discursive analysis Fairclough (2006, 2000) applies to the notion of globalization or to the ‘Third Way’ political discourse of New Labour. What is essential here, however, is that the author prefers to view discourses primarily as a function of knowledge rather than of language. For Foucault, for example, such discourses are not made of fixed units such as propositions, sentences or speech-acts (where the focus is on enunciation) but out of statements (where the focus lies with what is being “enounced”) that depend on historically contingent discursive rules and which cannot, therefore, be pinned down according to “a formal logical, linguistic, or even language-like system” (McHoul and Grace 2002, pp.35-39, 29). This is not to say, however, that Foucault’s perspective on discourses remains unchanged throughout his work, or that it succeeds in avoiding some of the criticism generally affecting all forms of discourse analysis. For the purposes of this dissertation, I would like to operate with a very simplistic account of the different phases in Foucault’s work on discourses. This framework presupposes that at one time Foucault was concerned with scientific discourses, at another, with discourses as embedding discursive practices, and yet at another, with discourses of the subject.

²⁹ See, for example, Saukho’s (2003, pp.19, 33-34) discussion of how the paradigm of the field combines the three methodologies of hermeneutics (“lived experiences”/“humanism” strand), structuralism (“discourses or texts”/“structuralism” strand) and “the realist project of making sense of social reality” (“social context”/the New Leftist or ‘contextualist’ strand). At the level of methodology, an interest in Foucault, hermeneutics and the potential of discourses for resistance against an official discourse, confirm this project’s reliance on a generally similar tri-partite methodology.

A Framework for Understanding Foucault's Notion of Discourse

The first phase sees Foucault question the manner in which groupings, divisions, parts or bodies of knowledge (in other words, “groups of statements”) have been united and imagined as scientific discourses (Foucault 1972, p.22). Here Foucault’s (pp.26-27) method is, firstly, to suspend the presumed continuities structuring the unity of a discourse, thus setting the entire field of discourse free, and secondly, to identify, within that newly released region (now made up only of “the totality of all effective statements”), “more firmly grounded unities.” In other words, Foucault breaks up the structure of a given scientific discourse in order to reveal a more lasting and permanent structure (idem). He achieves this by revealing the problematic assumptions of unity through which discourses have previously been constructed: that statements can form a discourse if they refer to the same object over time, or if they form “a codified and normative system of statement” (“a series of descriptive statements,” for example), a set of “permanent and coherent concepts,” or a certain persistent thematic that can animate a group of discourses (idem, pp.34-35). None of these options seem valid to him, and their failure as hypotheses results in the need to attempt to see the unity of a discourse not in terms of a continuous fixed object, or of persisting normative statements, concepts or themes but in terms of the “rules of formation” which govern the “field of strategic possibilities” into which such configurations (or others resulting from the play of statements) seem to emerge, perish and be replaced successively (pp.32-38). The “rules of formation” are therefore concerned with “objects, mode of statement, concepts, [and] thematic choices” and the system of their dispersion (but also formation and reappearance) that these rules describe gives the true structure of a discourse, or rather

the real discourse behind the discourse being analyzed (p.38). Already from this first phase, a certain criticism of any notion of discourse emerges, which in my opinion, can never be fully resolved in objective manner. Simply put, the notion of discourse refers almost simultaneously both to a terrain of knowledge to be investigated over a certain period of time, and to the inner structure that actually forms that terrain of knowledge. The idea is that the first term leads to the second, but the manner of selection of a territory cannot be dissociated from notions that heavily anticipate or pre-constitute the second term. The notion of discourse is, therefore, at least a double structure – there are two discourses, with one the alleged deeper structure of the other, and there is no way to fully conceptualize them separately. In a way, these problems have been touched on in Barker (2008, pp.150, 169): “How do researchers know what ‘texts’ or bodies of materials to choose, for analysis? To whom are they relevant *other than* to the analyst? ... What standards of evidence are required to ‘name’ something as a coherent, effective discourse? And what standards then apply to knowledge about people’s encounters with those, sufficient to count as having been ‘positioned’ by them?” In my opinion, the problems highlighted are part and parcel of the process of knowledge and cannot be fully escaped. In hermeneutical terms, I associate them with the notion of “pre-understanding” and that of “the hermeneutic circle” (Thiselton 2009, p.14). This is not to say that analysis of discourses cannot be extremely useful, but that the importance of the results lies probably more in the specificity rather than the generality of the findings, and that, as Saukho (2003, pp.15-34) argues, their validity can only be increased by performing multiple analyses based on different methodologies.

Going next to the question of Foucault's second phase in the analysis of discourses, this can probably be best described as a concern with discursive practices. Discursive practices are either associated with institutions (the prison, the school, the hospital and so on) and their procedures and regulations, or with the government and the notion of governmentality. Foucault describes them as "technologies of domination" (Foucault 1980) (or, in short, "disciplines") by which individuals or populations are studied and 'disciplined' so as to be rendered "docile and useful" (Foucault 1995, p.231): "The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy,' which was also a 'mechanics of power,' was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in terms of political obedience). ...If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (idem, pp.137-138). It follows then, that in this second phase, institutional or policy discourses or any discourses directly expressed in social action (be they scientific,

pseudo-scientific or non-scientific), can be seen as discursive practices, situated at the interface between power and knowledge. Unfortunately, the manner of the relation between knowledges or academic disciplines with discursive practices is too complex to be analyzed here. It will suffice to mention that inasmuch as sciences could not have been formulated outside the domain of discursive practices and of disciplinary “apparatuses” (Agamben 2009) their manner of producing knowledge is at all times intricately intertwined with the production of regimes of power and the proliferation of such disciplinary apparatuses: “There are bodies of knowledge that are independent of the sciences (which are neither their historical prototypes, nor their practical by-products), but there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms” (Foucault 1972, p.183).

If in the second phase Foucault is concerned with technologies of domination, or in other words, with “the procedures by which one sets about conducting the conduct of others” (Foucault 2010, p.4), the third phase sees his focus shift unto “technologies of self” defined as “the articulation of certain techniques and certain kinds of discourses about the subject” (Foucault 1980). Foucault tends to use the terms “technologies” and “techniques” interchangeably, and he defines these as “technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 1982, Context of Study, para. 2). As in the second phase, it is impossible to easily differentiate between discourses of self and

techniques or practices of self. These are always intertwined and, in this case, must be explored within the ethical, philosophical and religious domains of experience. These types of discourses could be described as ethical discourses of the kind we are used to (and, thus, as normal symbolic discourses or as discursive formations regulated by the old rules of formation such as that of being organized around a persistent thematic), except for them being reconstituted in historical succession and transformation and particularly through reference to the practices they lead up to or they develop from. Following, for example, the Socratic theme of “the care of the self,” through its specific Epicurean, Stoic and, in particular, Christian configurations over centuries, Foucault argues that until recently philosophy had presumed that the subject must undergo some type of transformation in his very being in order to have access to the truth (Davidson 2005). The rise of modernity (the philosophies of Descartes and Kant in particular), however, caused philosophy to become dissociated from what Foucault describes as “spirituality,” resulting in a philosophy relying on solely the condition of knowledge as access to truth (and, therefore, in regimes of ethics which establish morality as a code of abstract rules defined through reason): “We will call ‘philosophy’ the form of thought that asks what it is that allows the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth. If we call this ‘philosophy,’ then I think we could call ‘spirituality’ the pursuit, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call ‘spirituality’ the set of these pursuits, practices and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etcetera, which are not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid

for access to the truth” (Foucault 2005, p.15). In this separation, furthermore, Foucault sees modernity appropriating certain practices from the Christian technology of self, such as self-examination and confession, but only so as to transform them, at the level of impersonal rational procedures, into disciplinary practices. The full link is thus made between technologies of domination and technologies of self, both being simultaneously connected to each other and to “dispositifs” of power (Deleuze 1992).

If one reads Foucault carefully and in the major phases of his work, two observations emerge that render the framework presented above quite integrated and coherent. Firstly, as Foucault presents his work, it is clear that discourses as bodies of knowledge or scientific disciplines are deeply implicated with discourses as disciplinary practices (technologies of domination) and both closely intertwined with discourses about the subject (technologies of self). The sense one gets is that all three types of discourses are separated by very thin and mobile boundaries, and that one cannot study one set without also acknowledging the other:

“I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western society, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let’s say he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques, the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself and conversely, the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion” (Foucault 1980).

“The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it. This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge. In seeking in *The Order of Things* to write a history of the episteme, I was still caught in an impasse. What I should like to do now is to try and show that what I call an apparatus is a much more general case of the episteme; or rather, that the episteme is a specifically discursive apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogeneous” (Foucault 1980i, pp.196-197).

Secondly, Foucault’s oeuvre constantly reveals his interrelated methodological interest in human sciences, disciplinary practices and discourses about the self, with each of his phase acting as a period of increased focus on one of these categories, but never without highlighting the implications for the other two. In this sense, the movement from human sciences and their formation of the subject, towards disciplines as quasi-sciences and practices of domination of the subject, and, finally, to practices and discourses through which the subject is transforming himself, reveals a great sense of coherence in his body of work: “Up to the present I have proceeded with this general project in two ways. I have dealt with the modern theoretical constitutions that were concerned with the subject in general. I have tried to analyze in a previous book theories of the subject as a speaking, living, working being [in “*The Order of Things*”]. I have also dealt with the more practical understanding formed in those institutions like hospitals, asylums, and prisons, where certain subjects became objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination. And now, I wish to study those forms of understanding which the

subject creates about himself” (Foucault 1993, p.203). This framework, of the three types of interrelated discourses and general types of thematic described above, is also what gives this PhD project its general foundation and impetus.

The Christian Apparatus of Pastoral Power and the Hero-Mirror Mechanism

The question then becomes how is my methodology Foucauldian and to what extent? Firstly, I would like to emphasize that in the case of Communist countries the thin barriers between the three types of discourses and their general spheres of thematic concern are overlapping to an even greater extent than in the Western societies studied by Foucault. This is to remark that publicly influential cultural discourses can originate from academic fields carrying both a political significance in terms of Communist ideology and disciplinary practices, and an ethical one, in terms of the practices for self-transformation advocated. Another issue of significance is that this project starts where Foucault has left off, meaning, with ethical-political discourses about how the subject can and should transform himself, and their correspondents in publicly influential cultural discourses (from domains such as literature, philosophy, history, and popular culture). Furthermore, this exercise reveals a cultural mechanism that seems to have dominated the permutations of images of self-transformation of the subject during the Communist period. Two important observations have to be made here. Although not a disciplinary apparatus, this can be construed as the symbolic structure reinforcing such a type of apparatus by opening up an ideological space (at the level of culture and self-identity) which disciplinary apparatuses of a certain kind could then inhabit. To

precisely identify this type of disciplinary apparatus for the Romanian Communist society is impossible at this point. However, judging on the symbolic structure that is the hero-mirror mechanism, it can be posited that this yet unknown dispositif is, at least in part, identical with the Christian apparatus of ‘pastoral power’ described by Foucault (2007). In what follows, I will attempt to briefly demonstrate these two observations starting with the second.

Foucault (2007, pp.169, 203-204, 239) argues that the Christian apparatus of pastoral power relies essentially not on law, salvation or the notion of truth, but on a set of techniques and principles that allow the formation of a symbolical and institutional network able to constantly guide and assess the inner and outer lives of the individual and the community based on the idea of a fundamental relationship of pastorship between God and man (which is manifested in descending order from God to Christ and then via his apostles to the bishops, abbots and even the parish-priests): “And finally, if Christianity, the Christian pastor, teaches the truth, if he forces men, the sheep, to accept a certain truth, the Christian pastorate is also absolutely innovative in establishing a structure, a technique of, at once, power, investigation, self-examination, and the examination of others, by which a certain secret inner truth of the hidden soul becomes the element through which the pastor’s power is exercised, by which obedience is practiced, by which the relationship of complete obedience is assured, and through which, precisely, the economy of merits and faults passes” (Foucault 2007, p.239). Foucault’s work in this area is unfinished and he approaches the theme from different perspectives, without explicitly connecting them. Nevertheless, it is clear that the techniques he sees as the defining feature of the Christian apparatus of pastoral power

are “those oriented towards the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself,” such as, “self-examinations, examination of conscience, and confession” (Foucault 1980): “Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires, and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and hence to bear public or private witness against oneself. The truth obligations of faith and the self are linked together. This link permits a purification of the soul impossible without self-knowledge” (Foucault 1988, V, para. 3). Two such important models of techniques of self Foucault explicitly mentions (1988, section “V”), and out of which the later “sacrament of penance” and the “confession of sins” develop, are the early Christian practices of “exomologesis” (or “publicatio sui”) and “exagoreusis.”

Foucault (1988, V, para. 7-9) defines “exomologesis” as “a ritual of recognizing oneself as a sinner and a penitent,” a sort of dramatization enacted in the public space through which the penitent shows that “[t]he acts by which he punishes himself are indistinguishable from the acts by which he reveals himself.” According to him (idem, V, para. 13, 15), such a form of “exposé” was believed to efface the sins because, at its core, the practice of “exomologesis” relied on a “model of death, of torture, or of martyrdom.” “The theories and practices of penance were elaborated around the problem of the man who prefers to die rather than to compromise or abandon the faith. The way the martyr faces death is the model for the penitent. For the relapsed to be reintegrated into the church, he must expose himself voluntarily to ritual martyrdom. Penance is the affect of change, of rupture with self, past and world. It's a way to show that you are able

to renounce life and self, to show that you can face and accept death. Penitence of sin doesn't have as its target the establishing of an identity but serves instead to mark the refusal of the self, the breaking away from self: *Ego non sum, ego*. This formula is at the heart of *publicatio sui*. It represents a break with one's past identity. These ostentatious gestures have the function of showing the truth of the state of being the sinner. Self-revelation is at the same time self-destruction.”

On the other hand, as a technique of self-examination and self-disclosure, “exagoreusis” implies the correlated principles of obedience and contemplation (idem, VI, para. 3). To “make sure that his heart is pure enough to see God” and to achieve “permanent contemplation of God,” the monk must constantly examine his thoughts like a money-changer would coins, identifying which thoughts lead to nearness to God and which to “movements of the spirit that divert one from God” (idem, VI, para. 7, 11). However, in Christianity this can only occur if the monk submits in complete obedience to the will³⁰ of a ‘director of conscience’ and exposes his inner life to him completely through “the permanent verbalization of thoughts”: ”Here obedience is complete control of behavior by the master, not a final autonomous state. It is a sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will. This is the new technology of the self. ...By telling himself not only his thoughts but also the smallest movements of consciousness, his intentions, the monk

³⁰ “The endpoint towards which the practice of obedience aims is what is called humility, which consists in feeling oneself the least of men, in taking orders from anyone, thus continually renewing the relationship of obedience, and above all in renouncing one’s own will. Being humble is not a matter of knowing that one has committed many sins, and it is not merely accepting being given and submitting to the orders given by anyone whomsoever. Being humble is basically, and above all, knowing that any will of one’s own is a bad will. So if there is an end to obedience, it is a state of obedience defined by the definitive and complete renunciation of one’s own will. The aim of obedience is the mortification of one’s will; it is to act so that one’s will, as one’s own will, is dead, that is to say so that there is no other will but not to have any will” (Foucault 2007, p.234).

stands in a hermeneutic relation not only to the master but to himself. This verbalization is the touchstone or the money of thought” (idem, VI, para. 16).

Fundamentally, what I am trying to get at through this analysis of “*exomolegesis*” and “*exagoreusis*” is that, according to Foucault, the types of techniques of self which constitute the Christian apparatus of pastoral power revolve around the notion of the renunciation of self: “There is a great difference between *exomolegesis* and *exagoreusis*; yet we have to underscore the fact that there is one important element in common: You cannot disclose without renouncing. *Exomolegesis* had as its model martyrdom. In *exomolegesis*, the sinner had to “kill” himself through ascetic macerations. Whether through martyrdom or through obedience to a master, disclosure of self is the renunciation of one's own self. In *exagoreusis*, on the other hand, you show that, in permanently obeying the master, you are renouncing your will and yourself. ...This theme of self-renunciation is very important. Throughout Christianity there is a correlation between disclosure of the self, dramatic or verbalized, and the renunciation of self” (idem, VI, para. 20-21). Now, the point that I wish to make here is that, as illustrated above, the technologies of self posited by Foucault as central to the Christian apparatus of pastoral power correspond very clearly to the axis of sacrifice in the mirror-mechanism (axis which is later identified as having its source in religious notions similar to that of ‘kenosis’). Although Foucault’s analysis of technologies of self does not explicitly confirm the second axis of the mirror-mechanism (‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good’), this could be attributed to the fact that Foucault did not identify specific historical practices relating directly to this theme. Clearly, there are points where his analysis of pastoral power and such

technologies comes very close to this second axis. As Foucault (1993, p.211) observes: “to make truth inside of oneself, and to get access to the light of God and so on, those two processes are strongly connected in the Christian experience.” And what else would be the purpose of the renunciation of the self if not so that it can fully manifest or mirror the light of God? Was not the pastor or the master, as Foucault himself seems to acknowledge³¹, supposed to offer a model on which the monk or the individual believer could pattern his behaviour accordingly (and not only a will to which one had to subject his conscience in complete obedience)? At the same time, was not the whole pastorship model, as Foucault (2007, pp.203-204) also seems to describe it, based on the idea of imitation of God, first through Christ as “the first pastor” and then through apostles, bishops, and abbots and even until parish-priests? This sort of statements would seem to indicate that Foucault’s apparatus of Christian pastoral power also relates well to the second axis of the mirror mechanism, which stands associated, as shall later be discussed, with the religious notion of ‘imitatio Dei’. To conclude with, then, these are my arguments for why the hero-mirror device should be considered a symbolic device suggesting the existence, in the political domain, of a Christian-like apparatus of pastoral power. That such an apparatus of power could be more central to Eastern societies of the Communist type than to those in the West (and, in fact, based on the notion of ‘imitatio Dei’ corresponding to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism) has been noticed by Foucault (2007, pp.207-208) himself in discussing the conventional image given of the Tsar: “We have here, I think, an admirable image and an admirable evocation of a

³¹ “What I mean is that the pastor has a teaching task vis-a-vis his community. We can even say that this is his primary and principal task. ...Clearly this teaching task is not one-dimensional; it is a more complicated affair than just giving a lesson to others. The pastor must teach by example, by his own life and what’s more the value of this example is so strong that if he does not give a good example by his own life, then any theoretical, verbal teaching he gives will be nullified” (Foucault 2007, p.236).

Christlike (*christique*) sovereign. This Christlike sovereign does not appear to me to be typical of the West. The Western Sovereign is Caesar, not Christ; the Western pastor is not Caesar; but Christ". Furthermore, parallels between the Christian technology of examination of conscience and the technique of examination of conscience as part of diary practices in the Stalinist period have been remarkably well captured by Hellbeck (2006). Two key areas where the nature of the apparatus of power in Romanian Communism could be productively investigated on Foucault lines are those of surveillance by the secret police [see Vatulescu's (2010, p.49) discussion of the personal file with its moments of "characterization", "auto-biography" and "confession," and of the surveillance file with its "surveillance transcripts and periodic syntheses"] and of censorship (especially, of literature). Unfortunately, whatever work has done in this area has not followed from Foucault's investigations and/or is not readily translated into such paradigms. The exception is Vatulescu (2010), but inasmuch as her captivating study originates from a literary vision about the aestheticization of politics (developed out of Russian Formalist and Bakhtinian theories and the writings of Walter Benjamin) and her use of Foucault is stereotypically restricted to remarks about "Discipline and Punish," she misses the links between personal and surveillance files and technologies of self such as the examination of conscience and confession.

Until now, I have argued about how the hero-mirror mechanism can be seen to posit a Christian-like pastoral apparatus as possibly central to Romanian Communist society. What remains to be discussed is the status of the hero-mirror mechanism as a type of structure that relates to and, in fact, ideologically prepares the conditions of existence for the types of apparatuses Foucault talks about.

In the chapter entitled “The Mirror-Mechanism of the Hero: Its Discursive Matrix,” the origin of the mechanism is posited within the domain of religion, as it is here that the notion of the mirror-mechanism with its two axes appears most developed conceptually. For reasons of space, that conceptual presentation of the mirror-mechanism cannot be rehearsed here. Suffice it to say that, in theological Christian terms, the foundation of the mirror-mechanism lies with the concept of “*imago Dei*,” its axis of sacrifice resembles that of “*kenosis*,” and its axis of purity of heart and mirroring of the Divine resembles that of “*imitatio Dei*”.

As I have also argued in that chapter, the mirror-mechanism is not only an allegorical structure, but also, a highly symbolic matrix out of which ontological, epistemological and anthropological frameworks can emerge. The mirror-mechanism represents a symbolic master-structure, but one that specifies criteria and even provides clear guidelines about the ontological reality and epistemological possibilities of human existence. However, the language is allegorical and the possibilities of interpretation, if only we judge historically, are countless. Nonetheless, the two aspects of the mirror-metaphor specify the directions of human action in a way that is almost practical to follow. What I mean by that is that, if pursued, the next level of interpretation would most likely result not only in the establishment of a well-defined ontological or epistemological framework of a religious or philosophical kind, but, most importantly, in concrete human practices. To give more definite structure to this allegory is to formulate an entire body of Christian or Islamic doctrine, of Jewish jurisprudence or Sufi mysticism (the same applies to Eastern religions if considering the nature of the Divine-human agent as the first emanation from God, or as his energy of illumination),

and what is more importantly here, of religious and, thus, of cultural and social practice. The mirror mechanism, I argue therefore, is a symbolic matrix or structure that conceptually prefigures, but from only one-step away, any institutionalized religious discourse or practice. In this sense, the mirror-mechanism prefigures, but only from one-step away, the Christian apparatus of pastoral power and its technologies of self. The relationship between them is as close as that found between the axis of 'kenosis' and the two practices of "exomologesis" and "exagoreusis." Kenosis is the general principle, while exomologesis and exagoreusis are two specific historical interpretations given to it at the level of institutional practice. On the other hand, the notion of 'Pastorship' is just a specific modality amongst many of interpreting the more general concept of 'imago Dei.'

Between Foucault, Hermeneutics and Archetypal Criticism: How Cultural Discourses are Employed in this Dissertation

Foucault

If this relationship applies to the two structures, the same also applies to the type of discourses these two structures can investigate. Every discursive practice relating to the apparatus of pastoral power or any technology of self relating to scriptural religions must have its foundation in some symbolic discourse that prefigures it. This is something that Foucault himself has hinted at: "So it is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted.

It is constituted in real practices-historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them” (Foucault, 1994, p.277). The idea is not new and was mentioned earlier by Althusser (2003, p.79), who argued that the structure of a discourse, “produces only effects of, let us say, meaning, whereas practices produce real modifications-transformations in existing objects, and, at the limit, new real objects (economic practice, political practice, theoretical practice, etc.)” Nonetheless, Althusser (idem) also argued, discourses can have “effects [exercer d’efficace] on real objects, but they do so only by virtue of their insertion-articulation into the practices in question, which then make use of them as instruments in the ‘labour process’ of these practices.” My argument here is that discourses are not only inserted or articulated in practices that make use of them, but can also function as the symbolic matrices for such practices. This is particularly relevant for symbolic discourses that have an ethical orientation and are thus theoretically predisposed to laying the groundwork for the formation of technologies of domination and/or of self. There are several arguments for claiming that the discourses I look at in this work are precisely this sort of symbolic discourses that prefigure, from only one step away, the formation of practices of self (ethics) and/or of domination (discipline). Firstly, that in Communist countries there are thin barriers and also large areas of overlap between symbolic discourses (truth), technologies of domination (power) and technologies of self (ethics). Secondly, that Communist ideology is, more than any other, both an ethical-political discourse and a set of practices about how the subject can and should transform himself. I would even go as far as to say that Communist ideology is obsessed with the notions of transformation and self-transformation, or the creation of the new man, and with identifying and then spreading out the ideas and techniques

through which this could take place. Thirdly, cultural discourses like the ones analyzed in this thesis are, of course, by themselves heavily invested in the notion of cultural transformation and self-transformation as part of the larger concern with cultural identity. Their explicit aim is to be able to re-fashion the human self (and this, from within one's self). Nonetheless, this natural propensity is both added impetus and distortions by the high-pressure game of ideology, which constantly urges the cultural field to engage in its political-ethical project of self-transformation.

Until now, we have discussed how the notion of cultural discourses has been conceptualized in this work. Two arguments have been put forward. Firstly, that these discourses are looked at through the framework constructed by Foucault's oeuvre in relation to the idea of discourse, and particularly, through the notion of discourses about the subject (or ethical discourses) that correspond to his third phase. Here, Foucault's general framework is present in the concern with identifying how these discourses function as intellectual discourses (or how they are constructed and what they communicate), as identity discourses (what they specify about the construction and self-construction of the self), and as resistance discourses (ways in which discourses about the subject challenge or correspond to official ideology and associated technologies of domination). Secondly, an argument has been made that these cultural discourses are symbolic discourses that can prefigure, from very close, practices of self and/or practices of domination. In this sense, the mirror-mechanism must be read also as the unearthing of a structure corresponding to and prefiguring an apparatus similar to that of pastoral power described by Foucault.

Nevertheless, Foucault has not engaged with an analysis of cultural discourses of this type, and none of the three methodologies he has advocated as part of his oeuvre are being employed here. No archaeology of academic fields and no genealogy of a disciplinary apparatus of power have been undertaken here, although a sort of symbolical precursor of such an apparatus has been identified. Most importantly, although the methodology employed relates possibly most to his method of a “text-driven hermeneutics” (Paras 2006, p.12) that characterizes the third phase of his research, the two are distinctly different. In his third phase, Foucault’s analyses are of specific literary texts, which are grouped into certain discourses about the subject via the unity of a certain thematic that cuts across those texts (see, for example, the notion of care of the self). In this dissertation, the analysis of cultural discourses relies on a methodology that combines hermeneutics with archetypal criticism. The hermeneutical aspect reflects a concern with how certain cultural discourses have been constructed (including in relationship with each other) and what they seem to communicate. In other words, the hermeneutical manner attempts to capture an essence-like characterization of such discourses, although such constructions can only be of limited and temporary validity. On the other hand, the use of archetypal criticism derives from the need to assess the essence-like characterizations of such cultural discourses along the dimensions of the mirror-mechanism.³² As discussed in the chapter devoted to it, the notion of the mirror-mechanism refers to an allegorical structure and to a highly symbolic matrix out of which ontological, epistemological and anthropological

³² Except for where my language or thought have failed me, a certain degree of repetition is unavoidable in those chapters where the methodology employed relies on both a hermeneutical approach and on archetypal criticism. In terms of exposition, such a methodology would presuppose that a delineation of the main features or structure of a cultural discourse or theory is to be followed, in the second part of the chapter, by a discussion of how the mirror-mechanism relates to those main features or structure.

frameworks can emerge. Since the mirror-mechanism can be defined as primarily an archetypal and allegorical structure, or to use a concept from Abrams (1953, p.31), as an “allegorical archetype,” its use in the analysis of cultural discourses has relied on the type of archetypal criticism developed by Abrams (1953), Frye (1957) and, more recently and in Romania, by Braga (1999, 2006). Through the notion of the mirror-mechanism as an archetype like structure, it will be noticed, this tradition of thought features then as another theoretical and comparative direction informing this dissertation.

Hermeneutics

Cultural discourses are seen in this study as bodies of (public) knowledge established by intellectual groups or communities in ways that interact and influence each other. There are exceptions to this, such as the discourses of the Flacăra Cenacle and of Mr. Becali, but such discourses represent just more specific and more performative instances of cultural discourses already discussed in this work. Surely, because these discourses are affiliated with intellectual groups, and even individual projects, there is a view that such discourses originate with their author. However, this project departs from both the classical notion of discourse put forward by Kinneavy (1971) and from the post-structuralism of the early Foucault by embracing Ricoeur’s attempt at an integrative resolution. In relation to the notion of discourse, the subject and consciousness, and even the unconscious, cannot be fully discarded successfully, even if operating with such notions is, as Foucault seems to state, extremely problematic: “if meaning is not a

segment of self-understanding, I don't know what it is" (Ricoeur 1963, cited in Thompson 1981, p.56). In other words, as Ricoeur has argued, hermeneutics must acknowledge the problematic of textuality and the usefulness of structuralism, but not entirely at the expense of the subject or consciousness (Thiselton 2009, p.233). In my opinion, the tripartite framework of discourses given by the oeuvre of Foucault, and certainly the later Foucault, support a similar perspective. In terms of hermeneutics, such a perspective can be traced back to Schleiermacher's distinction between grammatical and psychological interpretation: "Every act of speaking is related to both the totality of language and the totality of the speaker's thoughts" (Schleiermacher 1977, cited in Thiselton 2009, p.157). Essentially then, in this work the notion of discourse implies a body of knowledge constructed by an intellectual group or an academic community, but in the manner in which a cultural current succeeds or grows out of another (so, therefore, based on a tradition of thought and practice) in a culturally and politically contested territory, and which relies on and benefits from the role of founding or key figures. Thus, at different points, the same discourses might be looked at as an abstract set of rules or structures of meaning, as the manner in which intellectual groups advance their knowledge-claims and legitimize their position, and yet again, as the key aspects crystallized by the discourse of a key or founding figure. The specifics of this depend, at any one time, on the workings of the hermeneutic methodology employed. However, the method here differs from the classic methodology of the critical hermeneutical approach described by research methodology books such as Bryman (2008). In such works, the critical hermeneutical approach stipulates an analysis of the socio-historical context of an author and of a particular text together with a formal analysis of the text in terms of each of its components and of the "writing conventions employed" (idem, p.533). Being

group-based in most cases, but even outside such a feature, the types and number of discourses analyzed in this work present too high a diversity of authors, disciplines, texts and types of writing conventions for the above methodology to be employed successfully and to completion solely, or even primarily, on the basis of primary resources. This is where the hermeneutical method finds its limit and continuation in the method of archetypal criticism. Braga (2006, pp.7-8) discusses how archetypal criticism presupposes a comparative method that is “multi-disciplinary” and “intermediary” and must rely on the findings of specialists regarding their fields. Such a comparative researcher seems condemned to an “eternal dilettantism,” in comparison with his fellow-specialists, but he benefits from a vantage point from which certain inter and trans-disciplinary connections can be established and a more complex general perspective formed, both of which tend to escape his fellow-specialists (idem). According to Braga (2006, p.9), and this applies well here, the aim of the comparative method as archetypal criticism is “the research and delineating of invariants, of cultural archetypes, of myths, themes, symbols, characters and recurrent scenarios, which pass from one culture into another, which have an existence that transcends the limits of an epoch, or of a domain.” As is the case with this thesis, such a comparative method relies not necessarily on the ability to generate new research in a domain, but rather, on the ability to rely on and select the types of information made available by discipline-specialists in order to form a trans-border architecture, to highlight unseen connections and, if possible, to identify some type of trans-disciplinary invariants. The hermeneutical method employed in the analysis of cultural discourses in this study, has therefore, been altered by the overall considerations brought by the comparative method of archetypal criticism. As a consequence, the resulting hermeneutics methodology employs the three concepts of a

hermeneutics of recovery (or the notion of ‘empathy’), a hermeneutics of suspicion, and of the hermeneutical circle in a manner that lends considerable importance to secondary sources.

“T[o]lerance, mutual respect, and reciprocal listening one to another with patience and integrity” (Thiselton 2006, p.7) are aspects of dialogue, of analysis and interpretation, largely missing from the Romanian scene and the Romanian public sphere, but key to the hermeneutical approach. The analysis of cultural discourses starts in this work, therefore, with a “hermeneutics of recovery or recollection,” which as Ricoeur intended it, is “inclined towards affirmation and rehabilitation” (Fairfield 2011, p.181). In this phase, the focus of the analysis is emphatic identification not necessarily with the author/s as much as with the type of knowledge transmitted. To some extent these aspects are inseparable but the distinction in terms of accent is essential. One can empathetically view knowledge as the result of biography or one can attempt to empathetically relate to the author by following closely his trajectory of thought, personal struggle for meaning and cultural identifications as developed across the background of certain thematic ideas highlighted by his context and biography. The second approach has been taken here and to this extent the authors have been identified primarily through their discourse rather than through their biography. Nonetheless, this has followed Rudolf Bultmann’s imperative, which Gadamer endorses, that “understanding a person or text [in this case, primarily a text], must entail having ‘a living relationship’ to what one seeks to understand” (Thiselton 2006, pp.6, 220). The idea, then, has been to become familiar with a discourse and engaged with it, to the point of internalizing it and being able to live through it and the type of identity it provides.

This ideal of emphatic identification with the discourses looked at has resulted in a very close reading of texts from both primary and secondary sources, reflected in the manner of writing. In other words, the author of this work has tried to abstain as much as possible from the role of the objective, impartial judge who summarizes authors and areas of knowledge in his own voice. Granted, something of the kind has been applied in the final sections relating the assessment of the discourses under observation to the notion of the mirror-mechanism, but the aim has been to postpone this moment. There is no doubt that this method of writing, presupposing the notion of a critical thinker who seeks to approximate universal reason, and is thus aiming to display a full control of its objects of analysis and pass judgment on them, has much to its merit. The empathetic approach here, however, has been to offer a type of writing which allows for a close examination of arguments and themes put forward by different intellectual groups or authors as expressed in their own voice, and in relation to each other. In some cases, this sort of tapestry has revealed a diversity of outlooks and a complexity at times hard to enclose within one unitary perspective, or in one evaluative judgment. In such cases, the tapestry constituted in relation to a discourse can be seen as identical with the evaluative judgment of that discourse. Another way to look at it is to say that such tapestries provide the reader with the opportunity to select which of the different interpretations or perspectives presented could work best as a determining evaluative judgment. In other words, the reader is exposed to the evidence examined, and at times, to its very open-endedness, and not simply delivered a verdict and presented with the underpinning reasoning. This approach is a more difficult one for the reader, who could more easily follow a clearly ordered and summarizing judgment of the author, but also one which is more empathetic, in terms of the reader having to come to terms, and even quite

intimately, with the nature of the discourses under question. Contrary to expectations, this empathetic approach has been applied to both primary and secondary sources. In terms of secondary sources, the initial focus has been on those assessments given under the form of self-reflection by actors involved in the production of the original discourse (that such actors are often found in the role of major critics of their own movement, intellectual grouping or discourse, is very typical in Romania) or somehow affiliated with it. Similarly, the descriptions provided by such secondary sources, usually key in capturing the stated ethos of the discourse under question and in providing an internal account of it, have been supplemented by any kind of noteworthy positive evaluations provided by other types of secondary sources.

In reverse terms to Ricoeur (Thiselton 2006, p.233), who emphasizes a “willingness to suspect” before the “willingness to listen,” this hermeneutic methodology starts with the empathetic approach and then moves on to a hermeneutics of suspicion. Both types of hermeneutics, however, depend heavily on the notion of the hermeneutical circle defined by Charles Taylor (1985, p.18): “What we are trying to establish is a certain reading of text or expressions, and what we appeal to as our grounds for this reading can only be other readings. The circle can also be put in terms of part-whole relations: we are trying to establish a reading for the whole text, and for this we appeal to readings of its partial expressions; and yet because we are dealing with meaning, with making sense, where expressions only make sense or not in relation to others, the readings of partial expressions depend on those of others, and ultimately of the whole.” The first and more classical application of this definition, particularly in its second aspect, is to read a certain text (or also, oeuvre) by reference of its parts to the whole and its whole to the

parts. Implied in this is the notion that a text will be read in light of its stated aims and the interpreting guidelines it sets for itself. This can lead both to an empathetic approach, because of respecting and following the aims and guidelines set by the author, but also to a hermeneutics of suspicion, in case divergence between these and the whole of the text become apparent (in some cases, the second part has generally, and in quite reductionist a manner, been referred to as ‘deconstruction’). If conceptualized as ‘texts,’ most of the discourses analyzed in this work are not susceptible to such a method. However, this method has been applied whenever possible, as in the case of the Păltiniș Group member Patapievi and of the Noica School, but also, primarily, as a main background technique for the key secondary sources employed. In addition to this, however, the notion of the hermeneutical circle has also been applied in three other ways.

The first of these relates to the first aspect of Taylor’s definition above. In short, due to the emerging, fragmentary and disordered (or ‘pre-paradigmatic’) nature of fields such as those of the social sciences, as well as the tendency for cultural debates and discourses to occur not in research but in journalistic form, through essays and personal cogitations located in cultural magazines, TV shows and internet blogs etc., the tendency has been to see the hermeneutical circle as comprised of all those meaningfully involved in the shaping or interpretation of a discourse. It is for such reasons as described above, therefore, that the notion of hermeneutical circle has seen this author navigate not only between secondary and primary sources (with many secondary sources located on the internet), but also between tertiary sources of less academic reputation (such as

Wikipedia³³) and sources, such as the personal blog of one of the Flacăra Cenacle sessions's participants or such as TV shows available on Youtube, which cannot normally be classified in any of the categories mentioned above. Nonetheless, I would maintain that the strength and novelty of this thesis relies exactly on the diversity of perspectives and ideas that such an approach brings to the fore.

Another specific application of the hermeneutic circle has been to posit the notion of a discursive space as the domain (the “whole”) where discourses of different kinds (the “parts”), as the ones analyzed in this work, formulate and meet each-other in interaction (interdiscursivity). This dissertation, therefore, has been metaphorically structured into two sections: the first, outlining the features of a ‘discursive space of transition’ in relation to Romania’s external context, and the second, in relation to its internal, cultural, political and social space. Beyond its metaphorical usage, this notion is essential in positing that all the discourses analyzed relate to each other in ways that are specific, in some cases reinforcing each other, in other cases having the opposite effect, but always developing in relation to each other. Of course, if judged by the order of their historical emergence, such relations can be, as is the case with the earliest cultural discourse analyzed, one-sided. However, the co-existence of these discourses in terms of their overall effect in the cultural sphere (and, therefore, their interpretation) knows not such temporal bounds (an exemplification of these considerations is provided at the end of the chapter “Solar Lyricism and the Recuperation of the ‘Inner Space’” particularly via the notion of “inner utopia”).

³³ There are many instances in which Wikipedia has posted articles deemed inadequate by the worldwide academic community. Nevertheless, I would argue that in the case of topics relating to Romania, Wikipedia plays a huge role. This is so, because in many cases, one cannot find a better informed, or more up-to-date, or any entry at all, on a certain topic, personality or institution relating to Romanian culture and society.

Finally, the third application of the hermeneutic circle has revolved around the notion of ‘triangulation’. The manner in which this notion has been applied extends the hermeneutic circle from what the cultural discourses analyzed reveal about each-other, to discourses which they claim as origin or inspiration (an important claim considering the tendency of disciplines and discourses in Romania to imitate or derive inspiration from the West), and finally, to ‘unmentioned’ discourses that cover the same topic, but from another perspective (see for example the discussion of “liquidity” provided in relation to Patapievici’s ‘Omul Recent’ in the Păltiniș Group section). These features could be referred to as forms of intertextuality. Thus, triangulation has been employed in this thesis in several ways: firstly, in using, as part of their analysis, the different descriptions which cultural discourses under scrutiny provide of each other (for example, the G80 generation refers to the G60, the Noica School, the Flacăra Cenacle and to the protochronists in particular ways and the reverse is true for each of these groupings), and secondly, in measuring one discourse in light of other discourses it allegedly claims to rely on (that is, checking a discourse’s internal logic against the authors/discourses it claims to rely on), or in light of discourses which have the same discursive object but which stem from a different perspective (checking them by comparison with a similar discourse but which stems from a different ideological position or from a different field, or against the very same discourse but at a significantly different time in its evolution). Noticeably, by employing the hermeneutic circle via the procedure of ‘triangulation’ what is being established is a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Overall, then, I am looking at discourses via how their structure has been defined by the discourses themselves, by secondary literature, and through triangulation as either interdiscursivity or intertextuality. That also means I do not have a similar structure, or more specific grid, through which I similarly analyze all these discourses (such as is the usual case with critical discourse analysis). Moreover, the self-descriptions provided by discourses, secondary literature and triangulation can point in very different directions. While, therefore, no claims to objectivity can be made, this methodology is meant to capture the existing state of consultation/consensus regarding the nature of a particular discourse at a particular point in time.

Archetypal Criticism

It has now remained to be discussed how the characterizations of cultural discourses resulting from the hermeneutical approach have been assessed against the mirror-mechanism via the method of archetypal criticism. In his first chapter, Braga (1999, p.5) identifies three types of “archetypal invariants” historically employed in the analysis of texts: “metaphysical (or ontological), psychological (anthropological) and cultural.” The metaphysical archetype is “an ontological essence,” meaning, it represents an “objective presence” that goes well beyond the realm of human existence and of subjectivity (idem). Such archetypes can be conceived of as either “transcendental essences” (for example, as either Plato’s ‘Ideas’ or as “transcendental principles with ontological priority” such as the Logos, the ‘One’ in Plotinus or Schopenhauer’s notion of ‘Will’) or as “immanent essences” (Aristotle’s ‘formal causes,’ or the theory of chromosomes)

(p.6). In this case, the role of archetypal criticism is to uncover the metaphysical archetypes located behind the ideas and images contained in a discourse (idem). However, due the postmodern critique, this correspondence must be viewed as evincing some sort of parallelism (between a theological or philosophical text and a literary one) rather than as implying a relationship of causation (p.7). In other words, the meaning of a literary text cannot be restricted to an 'original' sense found in a theological text. As for the psychological archetypes, these represent not categories of the real, but "mental categories" which function at the level of the conscious (Kant's categories) or of the subconscious (Jung's archetypes or Blaga's 'abyssal categories'; also here is listed the 'cultural morphology' approach of Frobenius, Spengler, Wolfflin and Blaga) (pp.9-12). In this case, archetypal criticism is directed at uncovering, within the psychology of the author, the forces that motivate his writing and of which he remains unaware (idem). Last but not least, cultural archetypes can be envisaged as the attempt to identify cultural invariants in terms of their "materiality" and the types of relations they establish between themselves, that is, in a realm of culture detached from metaphysical or psychological explanations (p.14). The system of religious myths described by Eliade, the fractal-like invariants of Culianu, as well as Northrop's invariants in the field of literature, represent the more radical examples of this approach (p.15). In this case, then, archetypal criticism aims at unveiling a system of "general-human constants" that can be seen to form a universal or specific cultural configuration (at a general level, this resembles structuralism) (p.14). It is clear that, drawing on Jung, Braga (1999) proceeds to analyze Romanian cultural phenomena through the use of psychological archetypes. A relevant example here is his analysis, via the Oedipus myth, of the relations (and resulting literary conventions) established between the literary generations of G80, G60

and G90 (pp.190-220). In contradistinction, this thesis operates with what begins as a cultural archetype, but which is eventually described as having its origin in an ‘ontological essence’ or ‘metaphysical archetype’.

A work with which this thesis has more to share than the above is that of Abrams (1953). Abrams (1953, p.31) employs the notion of the “allegorical archetype” to build a theory of aesthetics that accounts for the development of poetry from Antiquity to modernity³⁴. This developmental scheme runs from ‘mimetic theories’ of art (Plato and Aristotle), through ‘pragmatic theories’ (from the Hellenistic and Roman era and until the 18th century; these can be equated with classicist poetics), to ‘expressive theories’ (romanticism) until finally reaching the ‘objective theories’ of art (these could now be equated with symbolism or, in terms of literary criticism, with the ‘New Criticism’ movement) (Abrams 1953, p.28; Van Rooden 2010, p.69)³⁵. Within this scheme, Abrams is particularly concerned with charting the shift from mimetic and pragmatic theories emphasizing art as mimesis of nature or the divine, or as the cultivation of pleasure and moral instinct in an audience via imitation of set ideals, towards the expressive theories highlighting the inner feelings and the imagination of the poet as the fundamental source of poetry. Of interest to this thesis, Abrams (1953, p.viii) sets out to chart this transition via analysis of two “metaphors of mind,” “the mirror” and “the lamp,” which he identifies as “allegorical archetypes:” “To put the matter schematically:

³⁴ Van Rooden (2010) is right to observe that the entire scheme Abrams develops to trace the development of aesthetical theories cannot be seen as neutral or objective inasmuch as it is entirely derived from the aesthetical categories put forward by Aristotle. However, this does not fully invalidate the role of the mind metaphors in the formulation of such a scheme, inasmuch as Abrams uses these metaphors at every stage of argumentation, including the moments of transition between one phase and another. In other words, if Aristotle provides the general hypothesis, the mind metaphors provide the mode of argumentation or demonstration.

for the representative eighteenth-century critic, the perceiving mind was a reflector of the external world; the inventive process consisted in a reassembly of 'ideas' which were literally images, or replicas of sensations; and the resulting art work was itself comparable to a mirror presenting a selected and ordered image of life. By substituting a projective and creative mind and, consonantly, an expressive and creative theory of art, various romantic critics reversed the basic orientation of all aesthetic philosophy" (p.69). How could the two metaphors, or 'allegorical archetypes,' be ascribed such a crucial role in the development of aesthetical thought? Abrams answers this in two ways. Firstly, he simply maintains that "[i]n any period, the theory of mind and the theory of art tend to be integrally related and to turn upon similar analogues, explicit or submerged" (p.69). In other words, his first answer expands the role of the metaphors from the aesthetical field to an even wider area of thought. Secondly, he emphasizes the role of certain 'allegorical archetypes' as foundational elements of any theory: "While many expository analogues, as conventional opinion proposes, are casual and illustrative, some few seem recurrent and, not illustrative, but constitutive: they yield the ground plan and essential structural elements of a literary theory, or of any theory" (p.31). This description and indeed, the notion of 'allegorical archetype' (as I have argued already), apply well to the concept of the hero-mirror mechanism. The reasons for this are quite easy to spot. Although he comes across this type of association repeatedly, Abrams fails to observe that the metaphors of the human mind are derived and in fact, inseparable, from an ontological concept of the Divine. In other words, that the metaphors of the mind as either mirror or lamp had originated and were already present within the ontological and theological structure represented by the mirror-mechanism. Two such examples that easily come to mind are the Old Testament statement that "The spirit of man is the lamp

of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts” (Proverbs, 20:27) and Rumi’s verse “The awakened heart is a lamp; protect it by the hem of your robe” (Rumi 1998, p.167).

Rumi’s verse clearly exemplifies how both notions are contained in the mirror-mechanism. If at the beginning, the mirror of the human heart reflects the Sun of God and starts a process of purification, in time a fire of love is kindled which grows to transform the human heart into a lamp, that is, the reflection of the image of the Sun in a clear mirror becomes fully apparent. Suffice it to say that Abrams (p.276) sees such an ontological connection, but does not distinguish clearly enough the ontological or theological structure behind the mind metaphors: “Our concern, however, is with another derivative from the basic analogy between God and the poet. If the making of a poem – or rather, in the present context, the making of certain poetic elements – is a second creation, then to poetize after this fashion is to recapitulate the original cosmogony. Hence it becomes important for critical theory which of the competing theories of the creation of the world are transferred from philosophy into the psychology of poetic invention: whether the Hebraic account of a creation *ex nihilo* by fiat and (in Sidney’s words) ‘the force of a divine breath’; or the theory in Plato’s *Timaeus* of a Demiurge who copied from an eternal pattern; or Plotinus’ doctrine of emanation from a perpetually overflowing One; or the Stoic and Neoplatonic tradition of an endlessly generative Soul in Nature itself” (p.276)...“As early as 1801, Coleridge had written that the perceiving mind is not passive, but ‘made in God’s Image, and that too, in the sublimest sense, the *Image of the Creator*...” (p.283) “Behind this concept of the poem as its own world does there not still loom, dim but recognizable, the generative analogue of the *Deus Creator*?” (p.284) As shown above, although Abram does not move from metaphors of the mind to a discussion of allegorical archetypes at a theological and

ontological level, he is, nevertheless, at pains to prove that even the Renaissance notion of the poem as a “heterocosmos,” notion which anticipates and is a central characteristic in the later emerging objective theory of art (in particular, of the idea that “a poem is an object-in-itself, a self-contained universe of discourse”), relies on an analogue between the human mind and God (p.272). In the end, the impression one gets from Abrams (1953) is that the core aesthetical notions and metaphors of the mind of Western civilization were initially formed in relation to an ontology of the Divine and to traditions closer to religious thought, but that the move away from God has gradually erased the remembrance of these connections.

Finally, nowhere is the method of archetypal criticism better defined and more closely affiliated with the notion of the mirror-mechanism than in Northrop Frye’s (1957) “Anatomy of Criticism.” In this complex work, Frye proceeds to entirely refashion the notion of literature as well as the method of literary criticism starting from the notion of the symbol as archetype. His method of archetypal criticism, if judging by the development of his argument, proceeds in the manner of an arc that is at first ascending and based on an inductive method, and then descending and based on a deductive approach. Literature, Frye (1957, p.7) commences, should be examined not through principles borrowed from “theology, philosophy, politics or science,” but through “a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field.” In this, Frye identifies the body of literature as an autonomous system that develops, like mathematics, based on its own principles and hypotheses. In the case of literature, these take the forms of poems and Frye insists that each poem is a creation of poems from before it, i.e., that it draws on them and on the recurrent imagery that traverses them. It

is easy to see how concern with “the analysis of recurrent imagery” in poems leads Frye (p.86) to those more persistent and potentially universal symbols, which he refers to as archetypes. At this point, and this is where his inductive method comes to the fore, Frye (p.121) sets out to examine the extension of the archetype in relation to the whole of literature: “We said that we could get a whole liberal education by picking up one conventional poem, *Lycidas* for example, and following its archetypes through literature.” This method leads him to develop two abstract conclusions, of which one also receives a surprisingly concrete form. The first conclusion is that, seen through the complex and uninterrupted patterns created by the archetypes, the entire body of literature can be viewed as a whole: “The study of archetypes is the study of literary symbols as parts of a whole. If there are such things as archetypes at all, then, we have to take yet another step, and conceive the possibility of a self-contained literary universe” (p.118). The second conclusion is that the tracing of the archetypes across the domain of literature points to the existence of a center to this ‘whole’. In other words, Frye (*idem*) argues that “far from being an endless series of free associations” the archetypes point not only to the existence of “a real structure” but also to the existence of a “center of archetypes” consisting of “a group of universal symbols.” Concretely, while shunning away from identifying this center with “the Word of God, the person of Christ, the historical Jesus, the Bible or church dogma,” that is, with “an object of faith or an ontological personality” (p.126), Frye locates this center in “the symbolism of the Bible” (p.135). With this center found, the inductive method reaches its end. However, before proceeding further, several aspects must be emphasized here that point to an essential relationship with the mirror-mechanism. If Frye refuses to identify the center of literature with Christ or any other ‘ontological personality’ this is so only because he

seeks to establish the domain of literature as distinct and autonomous from outside domains such as that of religion. For, in fact, Frye (pp.119-120) retains the abstract idea that all symbols and archetypes are united into a center as into a single being, and also identifies this being with the idea of an “infinite and eternal living body” of man, i.e., with “a universal man who is also a divine being.” Therefore, at the core of the archetypal method, of the apparatus of literary criticism and of literature, stands the same Divine-human agent that is located at the center of the mirror-mechanism. This carries huge implications. Firstly, if such a center exists, then all poems and all aspects of literature are reflective of it and connected to it: “Thus the center of the literary universe is whatever poem we happen to be reading. One step further, and the poem appears as a microcosm of all literature, an individual manifestation of the total order of words” (p.121). Secondly, a new type of criticism can be developed in relation to the imagery surrounding the notion of center, referred to as ‘anagogical criticism’: “If we look at *Lycidas* anagogically, for example, we see that the subject of the elegy has been identified with a god who personifies both the sun that falls into the western ocean at night and the vegetable life that dies in the autumn. In the latter aspect *Lycidas* is the Adonis or Tammuz whose ‘annual wound,’ as Milton calls it elsewhere, was the subject of a ritual lament in Mediterranean religion, and has been incorporated in the pastoral elegy since Theocritus, as the title of Shelley's *Adonais* shows more clearly. As a poet, *Lycidas*'s archetype is Orpheus, who also died young, in much the same role as Adonis, and was flung into the water. As priest, his archetype is Peter, who would have drowned on the ‘Galilean lake’ without the help of Christ. Each aspect of *Lycidas* poses the question of premature death as it relates to the life of man, of poetry, and of the Church. But all of these aspects are contained within the figure of Christ, the young dying god

who is eternally alive, the Word that contains all poetry, the head and body of the Church, the good Shepherd whose pastoral world sees no winter, the Sun of righteousness that never sets, whose power can raise Lycidas, like Peter, out of the waves, as it redeems souls from the lower world, which Orpheus failed to do. Christ does not enter the poem as a character, but he pervades every line of it so completely that the poem, so to speak, enters him” (pp.121-122). Thirdly, and this is where our discussion of the second part of the method of archetypal criticism resumes, if expanded, the reality of Christ or the Word/Logos provides an essential ontological structure from the center of which the archetypes of literature can seem to unfold or descend: “Thus the apocalyptic world of the Bible presents the following pattern:

divine world = society of gods = One God

human world — society of men = One Man

animal world = sheepfold = One Lamb

vegetable world = garden or park = One Tree (of Life)

mineral world = city = One Building, Temple, Stone

The conception 'Christ' unites all these categories in identity: Christ is both the one God and the one Man, the Lamb of God, the tree of life, or vine of which we are the branches, the stone which the builders rejected, and the rebuilt temple which is identical with his risen body” (pp.141-142). Again, it shall be noticed here that this fits well with the observation that in its most complex form, the mirror-mechanism is identical with the description of the nature of the Divine-human agent. The same is obviously true of

the center of literature as a whole identified by Frye. From here on, a model of diffusion or descent takes over which could be resembled with a deductive method in terms of application. This constitutes the second part of the method of archetypal criticism. The first manner in which this model of diffusion can be understood is in relation to the operations applied to the “apocalyptic imagery” discussed above. From its “mythological mode,” apocalyptic imagery becomes first attenuated in the “analogical imagery” of romantic, high and low mimetic modes (an idealized world of heroes and heroines in an age of innocence), to then find its exact opposite counterpart in the “demonical imagery” of the ironic mode (‘heaven’ vs. ‘hell,’ ‘tree of life’ vs. ‘tree of death,’ ‘water of life’ vs. ‘water of death,’ ‘purgatorial or cleansing fire’ vs. ‘hellish fire’ etc.) (pp.148-151). Frye (p.137) refers to this process of diffusion as “displacement,” highlighting the difficulties encountered in attempting to trace it across the different types of imagery: “In a myth we can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees. In more realistic modes the association becomes less significant and more a matter of incidental, even coincidental or accidental, imagery.” Based on this displacement of “apocalyptic imagery” into “analogical” and “demonical imagery” Frye proceeds to outline certain categories for fictional modes, the notion of symbol and for broader literary genres (comedy, romance, tragedy, irony). The issue of the broader literary genres is too complex to be discussed here. Suffice it to say that these notions correspond to the cycle of the seasons that plays an essential symbolic role in religious literature, and to movements within the continuum stretching from the demonical to the analogical and the apocalyptic. The pattern of diffusion is more easily discernible in the notion of the symbol, with the resulting configuration corresponding to different types of literary

criticism. Thus, the symbol as sign is contained in the symbol as motif, contained in the symbol as image, itself being enclosed within the notion of the symbol as archetype, itself incorporated by the notion of the symbol as monad: “Anagogically, then, the symbol is a monad, all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is, as *dianoia*, the Logos, and, as *mythos*, total creative act” (p.121). Finally, the model of diffusion appears most clearly, and this is of direct relevance to the concept of the hero-mirror mechanism, in the classification of the types of fictional modes based on the notion of the hero:

“Fictions, therefore, may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same. Thus:

1. If superior in *kind* both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a *myth* in the common sense of a story about a god. Such stories have an important place in literature, but are as a rule found outside the normal literary categories.
2. If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. ...
3. If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the *high mimetic* mode, of most epic and tragedy, and is primarily the kind of hero that Aristotle had in mind.

4. If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of most comedy and of realistic fiction. ...

5. If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic mode*” (p.33).

This might seem simplistic but with this pattern of diffusion and its resultant fictional modes Frye traces the historical development of Western literature. In other words, the pattern of diffusion originating with archetypal imagery and ending with demonical imagery is, in Frye’s view (pp.34-35) historically inscribed:

“Looking over this table, we can see that European fiction, during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list. In the pre-medieval period literature is closely attached to Christian, late Classical, Celtic, or Teutonic myths. If Christianity had not been both an imported myth and a devourer of rival ones, this phase of Western literature would be easier to isolate. In the form in which we possess it, most of it has already moved into the category of romance. Romance divides into two main forms: a secular form dealing with chivalry and knight-errantry, and a religious form devoted to legends of saints. Both lean heavily on miraculous violations of natural law for their interest as stories. Fictions of romance dominate literature until the cult of the prince and the courtier in the Renaissance brings the high mimetic mode into the foreground. The characteristics of this mode are most clearly seen in the genres

of drama, particularly tragedy, and national epic. Then a new kind of middle-class culture introduces the low mimetic, which predominates in English literature from Defoe's time to the end of the nineteenth century. In French literature it begins and ends about fifty years earlier. During the last hundred years, most serious fiction has tended increasingly to be ironic in mode.”

As discussed, however, all literature, all poems, all symbols and all heroes originate and can be brought back, as the pattern of diffusion evinces, to one single “Word” or “Infinite Man” (p.126).

Until now this section has discussed that the mirror mechanism is an ‘archetypal invariant’ of the metaphysical kind (as opposed to a psychological or cultural one) and an ‘ontological essence’ (see Braga 1999) which can structure a theory in the manner of the ‘allegorical archetypes’ described by Abrams (1953). Inasmuch as I have worked with archetypes and not in the anagogical mode of criticism, the methodology employed in relation to the mirror-mechanism deserves (in line with Frye’s definitions) the label of ‘archetypal criticism’. Much like Frye, I have followed the extensions of the archetype of the hero inductively and across different types of discourses (bodies of literary works for Frye), identified an ontological pattern (the realms of being and the categories together described as ‘apocalyptic imagery,’ from which the continuum of apocalyptic, analogical and demonical imagery unfolds) that also translates into a cultural mechanism (an apparatus of literary criticism in Frye’s case), and traced its origin to a religious core (Logos, the Word, Christ, “the Infinite Man”). There are, however, significant differences. In this work, the hero-mirror mechanism is not applied as a spread-out ontological pattern and also not only as an ontological pattern. In the hero-mirror

mechanism the ontological pattern, while there, is minimal. It is represented by the concept of the Divine-human as both a mediator between three ontological levels (of God, the Divine-human agent, and the human being) and as the perfect reflection of those levels in relation to man. Or in very simple terms, and as applied to the cultural discourses analyzed, the notion of the hero. However, in addition to being an ontological scheme, the mirror-mechanism also describes, even if only in symbolical or metaphorical terms, the type of relation established between these ontological levels, particularly in what concerns the human being. The mirror-mechanism functions therefore as an ontological scheme that is also at the same time an ethical, aesthetical and anthropological scheme prefiguring what Foucault has referred to as ‘technologies of self’ (but, potentially, also what he has referred to as ‘technologies of domination’). I am referring here to the two axes of the mirror-mechanism that are identical to the Christian theological notions of *imitatio Dei* and *kenosis*. Thus, when applied to the analysis of cultural discourses, the methodology of archetypal criticism has sought to verify whether essential content corresponded or not to the notion of the hero (as *imitatio Dei*), and to the two axes of *imitatio Dei* and *kenosis*. In this exercise, what has been sought after principally has been not a similarity of imagery or metaphors (although some has been identified in the archetype of the hero, for example) but of philosophical ideas.

Three things remain to be added as a conclusion to this entire section on methodology. Firstly, that although I am aware many have treated the notion of discourse as a more flexible and, therefore, more capable alternative to the notion of ideology, I prefer to retain both as equally important and as interlinked in the manner described by Verdery

(1991, p.9): “Discourse is, for the cases I examine, the most common form of signifying practice through which ideological processes occurred.” As for the notion of ideology, I disagree with those interpretations that seek to equate it with a system of belief in its entirety, being in favour of the definition given by Frye: “An ideology starts by providing its own version of whatever in its traditional mythology it considers relevant, and uses this version to form and enforce a social contract. An ideology is thus an applied mythology, and its adaptations of myths are the ones that, when we are inside an ideological structure, we must believe, or say we believe” (Frye 1982, cited in Hart 1994, pp.208-209). It is in this sense that I interpret the notion of the hero-mirror mechanism, in its specific and peculiar reflection of the theological notions of *imago Dei*, *imitatio Dei* and *kenosis*, as central to the official discourse of Romanian Communism. Secondly, I also seek to depart from the monolithic notions of ideology put forward by advocates of the totalitarian paradigm (such as Tismăneanu) in the manner specified by Hellbeck (1994, pp.12-13): “Rather than a given, fixed, and monologic textual corpus, in the sense of ‘Communist party ideology,’ ideology may be better understood as a ferment working in individuals and producing a great deal of variation as it interacts with the subjective life of a particular person. The individual operates like a clearing house where ideology is un-packed and personalized, and in the process the individual remakes himself into a subject with distinct and meaningful biographical features. And in activating the individual, ideology itself comes to life.” In this work, I have sought to recover the workings of this ‘ferment,’ not only in terms of the specific subject (issuing or responding to a discourse), but particularly in relation to the types of variation produced within the cultural discourses analyzed.

Last but not least, this work has been identified as fitting with four theoretical and comparative perspectives: with a strand of literature concerned with Russian ‘socialist realism,’ with literature that seeks to analyze Romanian Communist culture at the level of cultural discourses, with Foucault’s work, particularly in its third stage, and with the tradition of ‘archetypal criticism.’

The other perspective that informs this project and which has not yet been discussed is one that seeks to combine a certain sociological and at times epistemological strand from field of Higher Education (such as Burton Clark, Tony Beecher, Paul Trowler, Mary Henkel and Peter Scott) with a more cultural approach to the issues of education and higher education (Ronald Barnett and Alan Bloom). This perspective is more visibly at work in the Literature Review chapter and in the concluding chapter.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, since “the scholar does not have any privileged access to a space ‘above’ discourses but is also formed by them,” this chapter has been written under Saukho’s (2003, p.75) insistence that the validity of any methodology for the analysis of cultural discourses depends on the author’s self-reflexivity in relation to it.

Chapter 4

The Discursive Space of Transition: The External

Context

The Meanings of 1989

The formation of the discursive space of transition is inextricably linked with the meanings and interpretations given to the year 1989 as the revolutionary moment that marked the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. As Goldfarb (2001, p.993) has observed, “[w]hen we think about the meanings of 1989, we usually think about big issues: the fall of an empire, the victory of capitalism, the end of an ideology - if not ideology in general; the end of history, an international effervescence of democracy, the victory of civil society.” Probably, however, the most important ideological consequence of the fall of communism has been the widespread perception that there is no alternative to Western capitalism: “Communism is one thing and capitalism another, and communism has been defeated, therefore the only alternative solution is capitalism. Communism and the Left have brought totalitarianism, capitalism and the Right bring democracy” (Țichindeleanu 2005, „NEA,” Mitul Mare: Nu-Există-Alternative, para. 1).

To some extent, this has been the result of the Cold War ‘overbidding’ of Western capitalism as a realized utopia in the face of similar claims launched by the Soviet Union regarding its own social model: “The true challenge posed by the Soviet experiment was the claim made by Stalin (and then constantly reiterated by the Soviet leadership) that the Soviet Union represented the place and earthbound incarnation of utopia - if not in

the sense of its total fulfillment, then at least in terms of its practical advancement. To win the competition against Soviet communism, its rivals felt compelled not only to appropriate this claim as their own but even to outdo it - and thereby redefine their own societies as universal political models. The present political and cultural situation is the consequence of this protracted one-upmanship. What has been lost is the neutral ground between the affirmation and negation of each individual model of society. The pressure to make a choice is mounting; the question of the distinction between utopia and anti-utopia has become the central political issue of our time” (Groys 2009).

This utopian and anti-utopian investment had significant effects after 1989. On the one hand, the West, and America in particular, could not help but celebrate this as the triumph of liberalism, capitalism, free market and democracy extending to the rest of the world. Only few voices in the West were found to suggest caution (Bobbio 1991), expressing the opinion that the fall of Communist regimes should be understood as a challenge to existing Western capitalism and democratic institutions and to the fashioning of a new world order. Out of these, most described the Communist fall as an opportunity for Eastern Europe to cultivate the liberal and democratic project in its ideal form, experiment which could serve to reactivate liberal democracies in the West (Tismăneanu 1999), thus arguing for a sort of revisionist and more complete liberalism. This, while somewhat muted leftist thinkers were left to worry about how, instead of taking advantage of the fall of Communism, socialist and social-democratic parties had slid to the right by adopting the political pact of an ineffective Third Way, and, also, about how the crisis of Communism could help fuel right wing populist parties and terrorism, through the absence of a political space for challenging the neo-liberal, global

hegemony (Mouffe 2005). Or, to simply reassure each other that the true purpose of socialism, “to save humanity from a productive system that has got out of its control, but in which people can live lives worthy of human beings” was “still on the agenda” (Habermas 1991, p.325).

These counterpoints passed mostly unnoticed as the ensuing Western condemnation of Communism – the continuation of the Cold War anti-utopian investment by the West, was followed by pronouncements on the death of socialism and Marxism and on the irrelevance of the Left.

At the same time, in the background, the decline of Communism served the ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism over postmodernist critiques. The unchallenged utopian investment of Western models at global stage silenced and bypassed the postmodernist critiques and engagements of the 1980s through the route of instrumental reason and the language of efficiency: “The legitimacy of producing a theoretical discourse on modernity passed from the competence of critical philosophy, of the philosophy of right or science, to the anti-utopian discourse of technocracy and of the newly established disciplines such as comparative political science, in particular, and comparative social sciences in general. ... Retreating within the academic worlds of critical theory, the debate on postmodernity became itself a sort of metanarrative, more or less museumficated, a triadic fundament or precondition for the critical-theoretical discourse in Western academia” (Țichindeleanu 2006, Postmodernity as a Finished Project, para. 5).

To sum it up, it was in this context that former Communist countries had to face their unresolved trauma: that of emerging from the catastrophic collapse of socialist/Marxist models and onto the global scene as exponents of failure, namely, with a condemned past, a condemned ideology and to the extent they had invested in socialist utopias, with a condemned identity (Groys 2008). While communism had introduced the competition of societal models at global stage - battle which it lost, post-communist countries now also failed to meet the resultant postmodernist taste of the global market for difference and “colorful diversity,” leaving them with a condemned and outdated European identity (that of Marxism) and a developing ‘Zelig’ syndrome: “The post-Communist subject must feel like a Warhol Coca-Cola bottle brought back from the museum into the supermarket. In the museum, this Coca-Cola bottle was an artwork and had an identity—but back in the supermarket the same Coca-Cola bottle looks just like every other Coca-Cola bottle. Unfortunately, this complete break with the historical past and the resultant erasure of cultural identity are as difficult to explain to the outside world as it is to describe the experience of war or prison to someone who has never been at war or in prison. And that is why, instead of trying to explain his or her lack of cultural identity, the post-Communist subject tries to invent one—acting like Zelig in the famous Woody Allen movie” (Groys 2008, pp.151, 156-157).

This seemingly desperate “quest for a cultural identity” appears to be rooted, then, not only internally, but also externally, in “the requirements of international cultural markets” (idem, p.157). “Eastern Europeans want now to be as nationalistic, as traditional, as culturally identifiable as all the others,” but, while their “apparent nationalism” seeks mainly to accommodate the Western cultural taste “for otherness” the

West receives this “as a ‘rebirth’ of nationalism” reinforcing “the current belief in otherness and diversity” (idem).

From the Global Myth of ‘No Alternative’ to an Incipient Acceptance of a New Left

As described before, the myth that there is ‘no alternative’ to capitalism has been described as having its roots in the Cold War utopian and anti-utopian overbidding between the US and the USSR (Groys 2009). According to this interpretation, the black and white mythological thinking portraying communism as the only alternative, and capitalism as evil, has resulted in the inevitable reversal of these terms after 1989. Ultimately, this reversal occurred not only in the psyche of the West but also in that of post-communist countries, now free from Communism but still trapped in its Manichean and absolutist logic.

A similar discussion has seen global capital credited with the creation, within post-communist countries, of an industry of cultural production (Țichindeleanu 2005) and of a mass-media culture (Sârbu 2006) that emphasizes, in clear Manichean terms, a neoliberal ideology of transition.

For Țichindeleanu (2005, Imperativul fragmentării, para. 4), the industry of cultural production has cultivated an “Inquisitional rhetoric” about Marxism, and has promoted, instead of reflection and anamnesis, the trial, condemnation and the forgetting of Communism: “‘Communism’, ‘the left’ are overwhelmingly treated in the ‘civilized’

press in Romania as non-thoughts and through non-thinking. We do not think when we speak about communism: we accuse, swear, point the finger, we run as much as we can away from thinking. ‘We know what it is all about,’ all we have left to do is to deride it, to anathematize and condemn it. The recourse to purely negative references, most often associated with concrete people, names and faces (‘Iliescu’), instead of ideas and concepts, is primarily a comfortable refusal to make the effort of thinking, to reflect on what has been, on what ‘what has been’ could mean.” The condemnation of Communism functions therefore, according to Țichindeleanu (2005) as a way to postpone thinking about the past, as a way to induce forgetfulness, in short, as an intellectual repression of the trauma of the past.

On the other hand, for Sârbu (2006, ¶ 5), capitalist mass culture has replaced ideology with “the spectacle of capitalism,” namely, the beguiling circulation of irrelevant goods, information and popular divertissements; thus leaving “Capital” unhindered in its processes of reproduction. Țichindeleanu (2005, *Capitalul, opium al revoluției*, p.2) echoes this view by stating that with the penetration of capital the mystical hunger for consumerism had replaced the post 1989 symbolic hunger for reality: “It must be emphasized here, without emitting any other conclusions, that the avalanche of the formations with symbolic meaning that pull, in an absolute sense, the entire universe around the subject, be it religious, nationalist, intellectual or just simply [economically] poor, has coincided with the penetration of capital on the Romanian market and with the imposition of the constitutive myth of the new Romanian society: capitalism means democracy.” To sum it up, then, for Țichindeleanu (*idem, Dezvrăjirea dezvrăjirii*, para. 1, 6) the false communism/capitalism dichotomy has been equivalent with the rejection

of critical thinking in the Romanian cultural space and with the unquestioning acceptance of capitalist symbolism: “Like any pretension to put an end to myths, the statement about the ‘failure of communism’ has come to propose a new, final myth: that capitalism is the natural essence of democracy and of the market economy.”

Last but not least, a third viewpoint has identified main Western commentators and specialists on Eastern Europe as responsible for putting forward, as a dominant interpretation of the 1989 events, the triumph of liberalism. According to these writers, the 1989 revolutions had brought nothing new to the existent political order in the West, except the possibility and indeed the imperative that Central Europe should partake of the already well-tested features of Western liberal-democracies:

“As Gale Stokes writes, in his recent history of the Central European revolutions: ‘Theirs was not a revolution of total innovation, but rather the shucking off of a failed experiment in favor of an already existing model, pluralist democracy’ (Stokes, 1993, p. 260). This is surely the dominant interpretation of 1989. Thus, Bruce Ackerman identifies 1989 with ‘the return of revolutionary democratic liberalism,’ ... This thesis has been stated most forcefully by Timothy Garton Ash, who maintains that the European revolutions ‘can offer no fundamentally new ideas on the big questions of politics, economics, law or international relations. The ideas whose time has come are old, familiar, well-tested ones’ (Garton Ash, 1990a, p. 154) - liberal ideas about the rule of law, parliamentary government, and an independent judiciary” (Jeffrey Isaac 1999, p.124).

Essentially, as observed by Isaac (1999), the impact of this dominant perspective has been the organization of academic research and of policy around one agenda: that of identifying what it would take for the new regimes in Eastern Europe to become liberal democracies on the Western model.

Twenty years later, the myth of 'no alternative' has seen its dominance slightly challenged even in the public space of post-communist Romania. However, this has occurred because the myth had been eroded globally by a series of successive economic crises, and mostly, because countless movements of protest ("Arab spring" inspired), from the Spanish "Indignados," to the Occupy movements in North-America and the UK, to the "indignés" in Portugal, Athens and France, to the "750 Occupy events world wide" (Rogers 2011) etc., and even to "minefield-type explosions" such as the UK riots (Bauman 2011), have brought "the radical imagination" back into fashion (Graeber 2011), despite, or maybe precisely because of their seemingly unorganized and ideologically diffuse character. A global reality to which Romania, through the new forms of mass-media, has by now become well synchronized, and to which it has responded in its own way through a most atypical (even according to current international standards) unstructured protest [a general reaction against the Romanian political class as a whole (Antonesei 2012) but without even an incipient programmatic vision, if compared to the Occupy like movements] at the beginning of 2012. The movement has allowed an incipient intellectual Left to become visible in the public domain (Mixich 2012), but this group (mostly affiliated with the "CriticAtac" group and platform of ideas – formed in 2010) has not attempted (or succeeded) to provide the protests with organizational impetus or an anti-capitalist programmatic vision, partly

because of a postmodernist ‘bottom-up’ vision, partly because of supporting the opposition representing the old Communists, and partly because the movement itself had insisted on not having any political figures (even from the opposition) affiliated with it.

Re-entering History

In general, the emergence of post-communist countries on the global scene has been initially experienced not as the integration into a new global order but rather as a pure moment of liberation, as the irruption into an unrestricted zone of complete freedom and democracy. Through their isolation from world events, post-communist societies had developed an undifferentiated view of the world, where a monolithic and imaginary conception of the West as the antithesis of everything evil in Communism functioned as sole reference to the rest of the world (conception which, arguably, reinforced Eurocentric thinking in Eastern Europe). This conception had as single frame of reference the ideals of the Enlightenment as manifested at the turn of the century in Europe, ideals preserved almost intact because of the humanistic and Enlightenment foundations of Communism, and because of decades of lack of information in the public space about the post-Second World War history of the world. Hence, the post-1990s interpretation of Communism as simply an interruption or a break in the normal evolution of Eastern-Europe countries, “a materialized Nothing, which, after its disappearance, dissolved itself in Nothingness” (Groys 2005, p.1), thus signaling the return to Europe. And derived from this, the highly idealistic and very naive hurried

acceptance of everything that came from Europe as the return of that utopia promised, in fact, by Communism: that of true freedom, true democracy, world peace etc.

In fact, the most problematic aspect of the transition of Eastern Europe could reside exactly in this reading of Europe strictly in terms of the utopian promises of Communism. For almost twenty years this reading has not been able to differentiate between modernities, types of capitalism, forms of democracies, varieties of Marxism, and in fact, has presented no inkling of the challenge of postmodernity, decolonization and post-coloniality, or the diverse leftist or human-rights social movements in the rest of the world. There was only one Europe (or Occident), to which the global scene could be reduced, and only one capitalism and democracy, that of the Enlightenment-based utopia of modernity. After twenty years, this is now shifting, but even this change has emerged because of the disruption caused in the social-political sphere of Western states by the current global economic crisis. In the context provided by successive protest movements, the emerging New Left (its gradual rise can be traced back to around 2006 but not before 2004) is just now beginning to formulate its intellectual and political-social agenda (CriticAtac 2010, “Who we are”). For now, this seems to revolve around two axes: a critique of capitalism in the Romanian context and the ideal of closing the gap between the elites (particularly, the intellectual elites) and the masses. But it is very early stages, and the European project, on the continued integration with which Romania’s fate largely depends [including the containment of “its illiberal national forces” (Chen 2007, p.168)], seems more uncertain than ever.

Chapter 5

The Discursive Space in Transition: The Interior

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

"On the day when the earth shall be changed into another earth" (Quran 14:48).

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away..." (Rev. 21:1)

Whether by emphasizing its "millenarian" character (Boia 2000, p.157), its similarity to a "Gnostic system" (Besançon 2007, p.19), its political system being organized as a "theocracy" (Kotkin 1997, pp.286-298), its similarity with Christianity in terms of issues of doctrinal continuity and succession (Kolakowski 2005, p.661), analysts of Communism have always highlighted that, in some way or another, it resembles a religious phenomenon. None more so, probably, than those viewing Communism as a "secularized religion": "The Marxist theology further developed by Soviet Marxism—Leninism was based on the Judeo-Christian eschatological model: The Garden of Eden – Original Sin and the Fall – Redemption – and the Second Coming. The alleged primitive communism was substituted for Eden, private property and the division of labor for the Fall, the proletarian revolution for the Redemption, and the future communist society for the Second Coming and return to Paradise" (Khazanov 2008, p.123).

Establishing the religious character of Communism is not a concern of this thesis.

However the structure of this work unfolds along two concepts, one allegorical and one, of analysis, that can be viewed as religious in origin. The second one refers to the notion

of the hero-mirror mechanism, which shall be presented shortly. As for the first concept, it concerns a certain view of the author regarding the religious character of Communism, but one that is only allegorical.

In this view, Communism appears as a quasi-religious movement because it sees political power, revolution and progress as a problem of culture, as a problem of interior morality that cuts across all aspects, visible or invisible, of civilization. In this particular feature, Communism corresponds to the notion of “inner utopia” (Şerban 2010), highlighted in several of the following chapters. In short, the notion of “inner utopia” originates with the Platonic idea that knowing oneself should form the basis of political organization, and envisages political models as fundamentally requiring an existential change in the inner selves of the people and of each individual. In this aspect, it can be said that Communism departs from Marxist theory and assumes a religious character: “This was a direct revision of classical Marxism, which claims that existence determines consciousness. The Soviet rulers wanted consciousness to determine existence” (Khazanov 2008, p.13). By having as its external subject global humanity and as its internal subject the very humanity of man Communism was, it can be presumed, a totalizing project, seeking to alter reality at all levels. In the manner of the Russian avant-garde, its spirit sought to destroy existent reality and replace it with a completely new creation: to re-start creation. To make “the first heaven and the first earth” pass away and replace them with a new heaven and earth. In religious terms, this “changing of the earth” (Bahá'u'lláh 1862, p.48) can also be expressed through a different metaphor, that of the Divine Breath (‘Holy Spirit’ derives from the Hebrew word Breath or Wind) as an act of creation. For the rhythm of breathing consists of inhaling and

exhaling. This is quite clearly expressed in Hinduism: “When Maha-Vishnu exhales, the material elements and universes emanate from Him, and when He inhales, the universes are destroyed and merge back into His body. Thus the universes and their respective Brahmas are created and destroyed with every breath of Maha-Vishnu” (Dasa 2012). This metaphorical image, of creation and destruction through the inhaling of an old world order and the exhaling of a new one, is useful in describing the simultaneous/successive processes of destruction and creation which Communism applies to society and culture. The Communist transformation of society and culture can thus be conceptualized as consisting of two phases: one in which society is emptied of its previous form and content (inhale/destruction), and another, in which it is filled with a new meaning (exhale/creation). The process is simultaneous but in terms of an order of temporality, we can say that for Romania, the period 1945-1964 corresponds more to the first phase, and the period 1964-1989 more to the second.

The Leveling of Society

A number of analysts (Verdery 1991, Deletant 1997, Tănase 1998, Tismăneanu 2003) have seen the development of Eastern-European forms of communism (excepting former Yugoslavia) as conditioned by the lack of national legitimacy ascribed to their ruling Communist Parties, imposed through and relying on solely Soviet military power. In this constellation of Communist regimes, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) has been identified as occupying the most marginal position, mainly because of its almost complete lack of support at home. Therefore, the dilemma of how to escape the

relationship of full dependency with Russia by gaining legitimacy and control at home through its help constitutes the starting point for the development of the RCP. To this, the fight for power between different elites within the same Party adds another element of complexity. For Romania, then, the question becomes the following: how to consolidate one faction of the ruling elite at the expense of others, gaining support and recognition but also independence from Moscow, while at the same time obtaining control over the society governed. It is alongside this continuum, and within this complicated triangle involving the Russian Communist Party and the society at home, that Romanian Communism develops as a form of totalitarianism. It counts enormously that from the three factions competing for power, 1) that of those arrested and sent to prison – “the national faction” led by Gheorghiu Dej and comprising people like Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Teohari Georgescu etc., 2) that of the communist leaders who took refuge at Moscow during the Second World War so as to avoid arrest - ‘the Moscow Bureau’ led by Ana Pauker, and 3) that of the veterans of the Communist movement in Romania, which remained in Romania, operating illegally – led by Stefan Foriș and also including Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu etc. (Deletant 1998, pp.62-63), the first one, shaped mainly through the experience of illegality, would gradually impose itself through the complete elimination of the other two (Pauker arrested, excluded from the Party and placed under observation, while Foriș and Pătrășcanu executed). As Tănase (1998, pp.47-49) observes, the underground experience of illegality, exile and jail was the main cohesive element of an elite group obsessed with suspicions and intrigues and which displayed a sectarian mindset and a top-down hierarchical structure that elevated the Party chief to the rank of a cultish figure. It was this fundamental experience that led the group to conceptualize society “as

a hostile and alien reality” and which most defined its political conduct (idem, p.46). Eventually, this experience combined with Marxist-Leninist ideology, in its Stalinist form (and with the cult of the party and its leader), resulting in a Soviet-assisted effort to firstly gain control of society through a repressive apparatus, and secondly, to transform the marginal Romanian Communist Party into a mass party able to rule the nation as a satellite regime of the Soviet Union. The role of the ruling elite in this process: to act as the vanguard for the ‘modernization’ of the existing society based on the Marxist-Stalinist model, namely, to promote the destruction of any spontaneity existing in society so that society as a whole could be brought under the control of the communist elite (idem, p.67). “Annihilating spontaneity” (idem) implied destroying the existent structures, institutions and groups giving society its character, and replacing them with institutions and types of social formations subordinate to a single political will: “One of the essential concepts of Marxism is that of the ‘classless society’, which proletarian revolutions aim to bring about. In fact, the destruction of the traditional classes is equivalent with extending the dominance of the Marxist elite of ‘professional revolutionaries’ over a society these are attempting to level. Stalinism became a totalitarian regime after the successive destruction of the large landowners, of the industrial, commercial and financial bourgeoisie, of the small bourgeoisie, the craftsmen, the artisans, of those possessing small workshops, of the well-to-do peasantry, as well as of that owning some land and the one poor, which it dispossessed. The leveling did not end with the old classes, but rather extended also to the new socio-professional levels and groups, the bureaucracy, the army, the party, the intellectuals etc. The destruction of all differences, forbidding the manifestation of any other interests except those of the regime, the isolation and mass-formation of the individual, the

absolute dominance of the state, of the governing elite, of the supreme leader finally, were the direction of movement for the Stalinist regime” (idem, p.25).

As in the case of Russia, the second part of this process required massive and intensive industrialization in order to transform the existing peasantry into the industrial proletariat needed to form the social basis and, indeed, to justify, retrospectively at least, the proletarian revolution of the ruling communist elite.

It is in this ‘leveling’ of society, or ‘annihilation’ of its ‘spontaneity’, manifested first through the stages of terror and repressive violence encompassing all levels of society (1945-1964), and then through the symbolic-ideological control of the population to be accommodated in different spaces into the newly reconstituted society (1964-1989), that the previous notion of the emptying of the social-cultural environment of its form and content (the “inhale” phase) gets reflected:

“Not only the groups of interests and the socio-professional categories of pre-war Romania were eliminated, annihilated, remodeled, the family and the individual also became the target of attacks by the ruling elite. ... They were dislocated from their traditional structures, separated from their places of birth through mobilization, exodus to the cities. They were isolated from their natural environment, forced to become someone else in order to survive, to renounce (realistically or just formally) their own system of values. Individuals were constantly under the propaganda offensive of the regime, subjected to indoctrination through education and mass media. ... Annihilated was any autonomous space in which the individual could have survived through his own means. Educated he was to obey the elite. Proposing the de-alienation of the individual,

Marxism (the Communism derived from it as a political system) produced for him the most radical form of alienation. His insertion into society had been emptied of content, his belonging to it, illusory (Tănase 1998, p.104).

Finally, while this discussion of the emptying of the social-cultural environment stems from a political/sociological perspective, the same can be seen to apply from a cultural-anthropological perspective:

“Leaders trying to instill a new symbolic order will aim to destroy or absorb into the political apparatus alternative orders and alternative meanings not yet bent to a new will. Wars are declared on cultural accumulations of an older era (intellectuals are purged, older authors are removed from bookshelves, school texts are rewritten), as new accumulations are slowly amassed to replace them. The possibility of different claims and justifications, of a different construction of reality that these older forms contain cannot be permitted to flourish. The extreme of this declared war is to be found in Pol Pot’s Kampuchea or in Ceaușescu’s Romania of the 1980s, with the razing of churches and buildings and entire villages that signify an ‘outmoded’ social world” (Verdery 1991, p.97).

“Socialist Realism” or the Leveling of National Culture

The following will take this process of ‘changing of the earth’ deeper into the cultural realm, attempting to describe not only what had been emptied or marginalized but also what the ‘corridors of power’ have constructed, voluntarily as well as involuntarily, as main official discourses on culture. Generally, the periodization given by Deletant

(1998, p.27) for state police terror within Communist Romania, 1945-1964 for eliminating the opposition and gaining control of society, and 1964-1989 for ensuring the continued obedience of the population, can also be applied to culture. The 1945-1964 period of executions, mass arrests, deportations, and labour camps (the leveling of society), that is, the implementation of a terror system of Stalinist extraction (with “the Securitate” agency paralleling the NKVD under the infiltrated leadership of former Moscow agents), complements and corresponds to the introduction of the constricting regime of Stalinist socialist realism in the domain of culture, with its interdiction of essential authors, works and magazines (the leveling of culture). Thus, between 1945 and 1949 the party bans 8779 publications, both Western (Plato, Nietzsche, Bergson, Poe etc.) and Romanian (Negrici 2010, p.54). The list of banned Romanian authors surprises, as Negrici (idem) remarks, for it encompasses almost the entire spectrum (from center to margin) of Romanian writers or cultural personalities and it extends throughout the history of the nation: “Vasile Alecsandri, Nicolae Bălcescu, Grigore Alexandrescu, Ion Agârbiceanu, ...Lucian Blaga, Gh. Brăescu, Al. Brătescu Voinești, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Dimitrie Cantemir, Otilia Cazimir, Șerban Cioculescu, George Coșbuc, Anghel Demetrescu, Victor Eftimiu, Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Filimon, Ion Ghica, Octavian Goga, B. P. Hașdeu, G. Ibrăileanu, Titu Maiorescu, Gib I. Mihăescu, Costache Negruyyi, Alexandru Odobescu, Dimitie Onciul, Petre Pandrea, Anton Pann...[and so on]”.

While past Romanian authors come under attack with their works forbidden or re-edited under the charges of nationalism, fascism or decadence/elitism (closely associated with, or derived from, class origin) – resulting in a society deprived of its most important

authors (the ‘classics’ of the time of nation-formation or those writing about the nation, the inter-war intellectuals engaged with issues of modernity, and those engaged in cultural exchange with the West), contemporaneous authors enter the all pervasive gaze of the Party apparatus, with its censorship and its pressure to co-opt. Obtaining control of the means of production is the Party’s imperative in the sphere of culture as well. While hundreds of professors are dismissed from university departments and tens of thousands of intellectuals lose their jobs, are arrested, and even jailed (Tănase 1998, p.165), professional associations such as the Romanian Academy, or the Society of Romanian Writers and the Society of Romanian composers are dismantled and replaced with new ones, with hundreds of former members being excluded (Wikipedia, “Realismul socialist în România”). In addition, publishing houses, printing houses, cinemas, institutes and foundations become state-owned (Tănase 1998, p.165).

In this first phase, the cultural void thus created is filled with Social Realist art generated either in the Soviet Union or based on the Soviet classic models. In the Romanian context, that translates into a similar literary or artistic account: that of the young proletarian revolutionary, fighting against his whole decadent society - family, friends and class, borrowing on the ‘light from the East’ to become the ‘new man’ of the Enlightenment: morally enlightened, scientifically a genius, and causing the uplifting of his people through the implementation of the Soviet Communist model (both as a moral order and a technological civilization) (Cernat et al. 2004).

All Things Anew: A new Humanity (“Socialist Humanism”)

Inasmuch as the Dej regime is a Stalinist one, the 1953 de-Stalinization campaign does not produce much change within Romania. A period of relaxation occurs, however, starting with 1964, when the governing elite - the nomenklatura - feels itself unified in its strictly top-down hierarchical model, fully entrenched within Romanian society, having permeated all its levels, and even confident enough to assert its own industrial policy in front of the Soviet Union. As observed by Tănase (1998, p.239) this corresponds with the creation of mass support through the introduction of the proletariat in its party apparatus, and also with the formation, out of the proletariat masses, of the technocratic professional elites responsible for pushing forward a more nationalistic agenda, particularly in industry. In fact, instead of de-Stalinization, the period 1953-1964 gradually brings about a period of de-Sovietification, and a return to nationalism.

Thus, the 1963 rehabilitation of Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917), art critic and aesthician who defended the principle of ‘art for art’s sake’ (arguing against the social usefulness of art), is equivalent with the official abandonment of socialist realism by 1964 and with the beginning of the rehabilitation of 19th century exponents of national culture and even of some authors from the 20th century (Deletant 1998, pp.171-172).

From 1965 onward, therefore, the Party starts calling for “the construction of an engaged, militant literature, based on the principles of socialist humanism” (Ceașescu 1965, cited in Deletant 1998, p.179) thus inaugurating an important recuperation and also mutation within the Marxist/Leninist discourse.

This sort of socialist humanism could be described to have resulted in two ways. Firstly, as ‘socialist realism’ stripped of its Russian imperialism and cult for Stalin in favour of the supremacy of the Party as the standard of Truth and Leader of the Nation. And, secondly, as the ideology of ‘socialist realism’ (needed for the formation of the proletariat) making way for a ‘generalized humanism’ (which it had already contained as an important undercurrent) able to disseminate/consolidate the desired Communist/Socialist mentality within the population at large.

It is important to emphasize that, while constituting a relative mutation within the previous cultural-political discourse, ‘socialist humanism’ nevertheless refers to a strand already existent within ‘socialist realism’ and, thus, embodies a certain form of continuity.

In the following, my intent will be to demonstrate that, from the very beginning, humanism had been essentially inscribed into the mechanism governing the cultural sphere during Communism, and that, as such, socialist humanism and socialist realism stem, in fact, from the same nucleus. In short, I will argue that categorizations such as ‘socialist realism’ and ‘socialist humanism’ or even ‘protochronism’ can be meaningfully envisaged as variations of the same governance cultural mechanism. Because art or cultural discourses in Communism (such as socialist realism) are so closely concerned with (and expressed as) actual modes of governance, it is important to acknowledge that classification through solely cultural concepts cannot take place without a description that can relate those concepts to some sort of governance mechanism. Nevertheless, because the cultural domain within Communist Romania presents so much complexity across fields and disciplines with their own developmental

time-frames, discourses and forces, neither general concepts like socialist realism or socialist humanism, nor the governance mechanism to be delineated later, can be claimed to assume either a neat and clean ('non-fuzzy') description and periodization of the cultural domain or anything resembling an actual account of its characteristics. Nevertheless, by viewing main cultural discourses and also resistant discourses as variations of, or as responses to a governance mechanism, I intend to show 1) that the governance of the cultural domain was aimed at controlling the mind by constantly adjusting it to new forms of behaviour or identity and 2) that this process moved from a phase of all-pervasive repression to an attempt at total inclusion (with a diversity of results) – both equivalent with the limitation of other discursive options (through either incorporation or rejection) for most of the population.

CHAPTER 6

The Mirror-Mechanism of the Hero: Its Discursive

*Matrix*³⁶

As an explosive mix of millenarian mythology and Enlightenment scientific myths (Boia 2005, p.6), Communism can be interpreted as a religious ideology that replaces the terms ‘divinity’ with ‘man’ and ‘sacredness’ with ‘humanity’. From this perspective, Communism is really one of the modern religions of the ‘New Man’, a harbinger of, and a guide to, the ideal humanity/perfect society: “Communism is, without doubt, primarily a religion. A modern, meaning an aesthetical one. The communist appears, before taking the guise of genius executioner Stalin or of neurotic Ceaușescu, as a new Jesus which aims to redefine humanity” (Matei 2011, p.99). In this “desacralized” (Eliade 1987, p.23) religion Logos is replaced, therefore, with the ideology of Marxism/Leninism-as-a-form-of-Humanism and as embodied in the form of the Party and its Leader.

The reason for this discussion is to suggest that Communism employs to some extent a model of governance characteristic of religious movements. More specifically, I refer here to the mirroring device through which the regular individual partakes of the divine qualities of the Logos/Absolute in order to become in its image (conversion) and thus become engaged in the building of a new civilization that will reflect the divine pattern.

³⁶ The first two sections of this chapter, it will be observed, are based almost entirely on readings of texts from the collaborative project of ‘Explorări în Comunismul Românesc, I, II’ (Cernat et al. 2004), ordered so as to form one coherent argument or structure.

“The Light Comes from the East” is a famous line used to refer to the millenarian role of Communist Russia as the place where Logos originates. With the use of this metaphor we can conceive of the Communist Bloc as a structure of minor churches reflecting the typology and directives of a central Church: the Logos (Light) being transmitted from USSR to each Communist satellite-nation based on the same mirroring device set to regulate the relationship between the individual and the Party/Party Leader.

I would like to call this mirroring device the ‘hero-mirror mechanism.’ This is so because in the case of Communism the religious mirroring device is divested of its model of the Divine, and replaced with that of true Humanity, embodied in the model of the true revolutionary, the hero that can bring the whole of humanity to ‘the promised land’:

“Lenin the intellectual knew how to think like a worker. Lenin the orator spoke without empty phrases, without bombastic phrases. The man that had shaken the whole world, the man in whose conscience boiled everything that worried this world, this man retained until the end of his wonderful life his capacity to think, and to think like a Chinese coolie, like a black docker. He understood perfectly the Jew or the oppressed Hindu which for him were each like an open book, the same way the metallurgist from Leningrad, the textile worker from Paris or the miner from New Virginia. Lenin is the perfect model of the new man; he remains for us the prototype of the man of the future” (Vaillant Couturier, cited Stanomir 2005, p.17).

As a consequence of this shift from the ineffable, or the sacred, to an ideal humanity historically manifested through concrete beings, the mechanism of the hero imposes on

the regular individual (nation) the need to reflect a complex of qualities (norms) personified by the Party Leader/Party (USSR).

Lenin, who was first at everything (a man of science and a revolutionary), the expression of the genius of his people, which he embodied through the purity and innocence of his soul, gives the measure of the hero-mechanism at the individual level (Stanomir 2005): “He, whom the masses of people had lifted from their midst, in order to express in clear and resolute words, similar to the ring of a bell, their unorganized cry, so as to build, from the confused chaos of diffuse yearnings, the idea, in order to rule the world; to lead them and to bring them together, and together with them, to conquer the world” (Ivan Olbracht, cited in idem, p.19).

On the one hand, the individual must reflect the fighting spirit of the revolutionary ready to sacrifice everything including himself for the larger cause of Communism, a hero that is the first not only in terms of social struggle and scientific revolution, but also, in terms of reflecting all human qualities at the highest level. On the other hand, derived out of this, the values of purity of heart, justice, steadfastness and obedience combine to require the alignment of the individual soul with the divine pattern of the Logos, the social norms and individual attributes described by the Party or Party/Leader. To summarize then, the hero-mechanism functions alongside two axes³⁷:

³⁷ This is well summarized by Ceaușescu in a speech from the 26th of January 1973 – his 55th birthday, occasioned by the Doctor Honoris Causa title conferred upon him by the University of Bucharest (see Ujica, 1:36:39 – 1:37:02): “Do you remember Kogălniceanu’s words to Cuza? Do everything to be just and to serve the people. This motto needs to guide all communists...”

1) the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself³⁸ (People, Party, History) – in everyday life this refers to mobilization in terms of the aims of the party (nation), which are generally organized around the principle of production (Gavrilă 2004, pp.49-50).

Example:

“To be a patriot, to love your country means to do everything in order to enhance the national riches, the socialist property, to give everything for the fulfillment of the communist party policy, which corresponds to the vital interests of the whole nation” (Exposition regarding the political-ideological and cultural educational activity of forming the new man, devoted and conscious builder of the multilaterally developed socialist society and of communism in Romania 2 June 1976, cited in Stanomir 2004i, p.419).

“The communists, all the builders of socialism from our country, must demonstrate a valiant spirit in their thinking and in their work, in their entire life, audacity and resolution in the application of the new, in the defense of the supreme interests of the people, to manifest themselves as fearless fighters for social and national justice, for the fulfilment of the aspirations for independence of all countries, for new, democratic, equal and respectful relationships between all nations, for the making of a better and more just world on our planet” (the RCP Program 1974, cited in Stanomir 2004i, p.424).

and

³⁸ “But Stalin saw his own role embroidered with both Arthurian chivalry and Christian sanctity: ‘You need have no doubt, comrades, I am prepared to devote to the cause of the working class...all my strength, all my ability, and if need be, all my blood, drop by drop,’ he wrote to thank the Party for acclaiming him as leader (Montefiore 2003, pp.50-51)

2) the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the

Good – in this context, the prescriptions/commandments/principles of the moral/social order elaborated by the Party.

Example:

“The communist must be an example of righteousness, honesty, of the spirit of responsibility, in the fulfillment of their work duties” (Central Committee of RCP 1977 September, cited in Stanomir 2005, p.419)

“...school is meant to mold advanced political-moral traits upon our youth in order to create the physiognomy of the new man, builder of communism and socialism with a wide horizon of thought, knowledge and comprehension, with a rich spiritual life, also owning superior ethics. The duty of school is to prepare the youth for active participation into the heroic work underwent by our people for edifying MDSS³⁹” (Congresul Educației Politice și al Culturii Socialiste, June 2nd – 4th 1976, cited in Gavrilă 2004, p.77).

This fundamental mix of activism – the hero, and obedience – the good soul, is what shapes the imaginary of the individual towards submission even at the subconscious level. Called on to aspire towards these elevated attributes, the individual is made aware that it is the Leader who expresses these high attributes in an almost unreachable form. Once the ‘divine light’ has been recognized, the ‘good soul’ can do nothing else than declare his allegiance to the norms/program originating from this source of Logos: “The Party is so placed, a luminous entity in the middle of the nation, it being the vital centre

³⁹ ‘The Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society.’

from which ‘radiate the creative energies of the whole nation, and which illuminate the way to the high peaks of communist civilization’ (Programul Partidului Comunist 1974, cited in Stanomir 2004, p.408).

The following image, the Frontispiece of Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, illustrates this above quotation very well. The Logos, that is, the Party in this case, is mirrored in the heart of the Party Leader, who then is himself mirrored in the rest of his communist subjects.



My argument here is that the hero mechanism functions both as a mode of governance and as a mode of ethics, that is, techniques of self (in the Foucauldian sense) through which people develop their own identity (Foucault & Carrette 1980). Modes of

governance and techniques of self come together because the Communist system is deeply involved in constructing consciousness based on the mirroring model: “We need art, cinematography, a theatre which presents the essence, presents the model of the man we must build. The people, and the youth have a significant role here, it is the people that have achieved everything we have obtained in the socialist development of our nation. They are the heroes that need to have their place in films, in theatre, in poetry, art, in literature, in painting, in all domains of art. Them it is that we must represent” (Ceaușescu 1983). (mode of governance = the mirror mechanism of the hero)

“I dream of a hero who would build a factory of love, or better said of wisdom, a factory for all, on earth.

Who could this hero be that makes me dream of him?” (Quote from one of the literary works of the pioneers from Bucharest, taken from the anthology “Dintre Sute de Catarge” 1969, cited in Cernat 2005i, pp.317-318) (technique of self = the mirror mechanism of the hero)

In addition to this, I see this mirror mechanism of the hero as the mode through which the Communist system of governance is given amazing flexibility and reach in terms of transporting the image of the Logos at all levels, from the international to the national level, and from there to that of the concrete individual. For example, while USSR was at some point represented as the hero-nation (and were not the Russians the first at everything, including technological inventions?) fighting for equality, democracy and world peace – the absolute model for Communism, the national Communist Parties ‘appeared’ as the true heroes of their nation and as local heroes of Communism (to the

point that in terms of national history, they constructed avatars of the Party and its Leader from important historical national figures or movements), this while the individual often took on the role of the humble and unsung hero of the common people who devoted himself to the cause of Communism (like the Communist engineer who brings electricity and, implicitly, enlightenment to his village, the factory worker who works to surpass the quota for production, the children who try to ‘make a good deed everyday’, the party activist who fights for the implementation of collectivization in a remote village or the science fiction characters – usually engineers, who discover technological solutions that can save the planet, or meet with alien civilizations that validate the communist model as the best possible in the universe etc.) (Cernat 2004iv, 2005i; Manolescu 2004ii).

The reach and depth of the Mirror-Mechanism

The importance of the hero-mechanism resides in the fact that, in terms of reach and depth, the Communist Party was able to employ it in very diverse forms and locations by operating with a different type of hero-image (avatar) for each existent social group.

Children

Pre-school children live under the horizon of the slogan “The Falcons of the Fatherland do a good deed every day!” and have to practice their literacy by memorizing popular poems such as “The Party is in everything/In those that now are/And those who

tomorrow will laugh in the sun/.../In the baby from the cradle and the man whose hair turns grey/..../In the life that eternally never dies/..." (George Lesnea, cited in Cernat 2005, p.245). First-graders learn the alphabet through poetry, "Wherever I go/In all I feel/ Alongside me you are/Beloved Party" (Spelling-book 1977, cited in Manolescu 2004ii, p.219), and by navigating through images of the ideal pupil – sometimes represented as TV character/puppet 'Așchiuță' - thanking the nation for the education he receives diligently (YouTube 2011, February 26).

In fact, children 3 to 7 of age (the 'falcons') are supposed to have as main avatar the image of the "pioneer": "All the falcons of the fatherland dream of the day when they would become pioneers" (From the cover of 'the Haws of the Fatherland' Almanac, 1988). Basically, for children until 14 years of age the pioneer constitutes the main avatar the Party offers (the 'Pioneer order' is one in which only 'the best' pupils 7 to 14 of age are accepted). Pioneers live in a continuous race against time (in and out of school) to achieve perfection in self-development, "the humanist ideal of Communism," by battling 'the enemy inside,' their ego: "He has to be, by necessity, an athlete of absolute performance, of the sublime dream, of self-surpassing, of total devotional selflessness" (Cernat 2004iv, p.238). The avatar stretches from the pupil called on not to confine himself by modest bourgeois ideals to "the sublime species of the pioneer-saving-hero" (saving someone from drowning or rescuing important folklore, for example) (idem, p.242), covering an impressive range of qualities, "abnegation, commitment, integrity, anonymous modesty, responsibility, audacity, patriotism, critical spirit etc. which must be attained through 'instructive exercises', the self-discovery of the youth being equivalent with the discovery of the Guiding-Party in his heart," (p.236)

and activities: “The pioneers take care of the forests, cultivate flowers, participate in the cleaning of towns, in competitions of artistic creation and interpretation..., make propaganda to humanity and bring the wayward on the right path” (p.243).

Youth

For the adolescent youth, the avatar takes on different forms, in all cases representing an arduous journey towards self-actualization in which love combines with initiation into the philosophy of class struggle, creating a triangle of love woman/nation/Party, through which the hero becomes the embodiment of the ideal Party order in his specific setting. If in the first period of Communism, the youth initiate confronts directly with real and overwhelming external forces that sometimes lead to martyrdom, in the second period, the challenge is mostly of an interior/ascetic nature (although ‘retrograde elements persist’ as elements of context):

“The bourgeois demon of egoism, a spiritualized and sometimes blasé demon tries time and again de young aspirant, the communist knight on his initiatory journey to obtain the Golden Fleece, the Grail, or the apples from the Hesperides Garden...His biggest challenge will, of course, be the confrontation with egoism, with individualism, the key of all uprooting, of the malignant dissociation from the herd, the ultimate trial” (Mitchievici 2004i, pp.186-187). More specifically, the journey involves types of avatars like, for example, the ones identified to characterize the novel before 1965: “1) the underground communist fighter without a revolutionary tradition, 2) the young worker who comes into contact with the construction site and whose consciousness experiences profound transformations, 3) the intellectual of bourgeois origins who converts to

socialism” (Mitchievici 2004, p.256). Furthermore, these avatars can be broken down according to the mythological features that constitute them. The underground communist fighter, for example, is constituted according to the following trajectory: “1) hard life, 2) hunger/thirst for knowledge, 3) initiation into the Party, 4) professional revolutionary, 5) heroic death” (Șerban 1997 cited in idem, p.274).

The Worker

Forcing a definition, the workers’ hero is the laborer who continuously exceeds production norms and quotas. Normally, at the other end of the spectrum stands the saboteur. The humanist ideal is also present here. If the construction site is the place of revolutionary change, this refers not only to the production of material things but also to the construction of the new man (the communist). This has a number of implications. For example, workers’ theatre brigades having to stage plays about the life of the worker assume certain avatar-like roles, one of them being that of the worker-artist: “The actor and the proletarian meet each other either in the endless surpassing of norms, or in the mimicking of such activities, in a sort of space-time continuum” (Mitchievici 2004i, p.196). Another consequence is the equivalence drawn between the quality of products and the quality of men: a flawed product testifies to a flawed soul. Which also implies that ‘the master,’ or any other representative of ‘quality control,’ is able to ‘correct’ not only the products but also the mentalities that generated such flawed products. The trajectory of the industrial hero is usually the same as for all the other avatars. The worker gets tested (cheating in a competition, slacking off or being sidetracked by propositions of a sexual nature, and initially fails ideologically by choosing the wrong option or side. Through discussion with his tovarisch (usually a model industrial hero)

he is brought on the right path and by acknowledging everything in the front of the collective (confession = Communist praise) he receives redemption and becomes a true communist. With that, production resumes, but at a higher level (*idem*).

The Intellectual

The intellectual is closer to being corrupted or affected by the decadence of the bourgeoisie than any other social type. Part of this has to do with the ‘unhealthy’ class origin of the intellectuals and part of it with the fact that art is seen as a symbolic sphere constructed to promote the interests of the bourgeoisie: “The bourgeoisie holds a powerful symbolic advantage, namely, the art through which it surrounds itself... And exactly here lies the malefic-seductive character of the bourgeois society, in the cult for the beautiful, of art for art’s sake, of decadent aestheticism” (Mitchievici 2005i, p.186). Aestheticism is rejected (and countered instead with socialist realism) with the onset of Communism because it tends to dwell on the self (at the expense of the masses), to promote conflicted characters (rather than positive heroes as representatives of the masses), and to introduce negative categories associated with nostalgia and defeatism: “Consequently, nostalgia, backward-looking, melancholy and reverie will become trademarks of an intolerable, ‘reactionary’, pessimistic, defeatist attitude, incompatible with the élan of the ascending classes” (p.172). True recognition of the cause of Communism as an unstoppable social revolution (decreed by the Law of History) implies vitality, energy, namely, a state of positivism that can be transmitted from the intellectual to the masses he serves. In short, what is required is faith, expressed and epitomized: “In a teleological way, the novel must be populated with positive, exemplary heroes who succeed, because failure will be eradicated from the symbolic

economy of the system. Failure hides a defeatist attitude, a lack of trust, it contradicts life, codified through victory and proletarian emancipation” (p.170). Parallel with this rejection of aestheticism as a form of defeatism comes the rejection of another form of bourgeois decadence, namely, that of the principle of art for art’s sake. Non-aligned art sits under the sign of decadence. The independence or neutrality of art as a domain is condemned as a form of separation from the masses which are identified as the central origin of revolutionary consciousness and also as the body through which it flows in its pure form: “An intellectual who does not adhere to the high ideals of the people contravenes against scientific exigencies themselves. The intellectual betrays his ‘reason for being’ not only when regimented within the ranks of the reactionary but even then when he isolates himself in his ivory tower, because this way, he does not help with the preservation of the purity of thinking, but rather sterilizes it, breaking it away from the living roots of life and truth” (Gheorghiu-Dej 1946, cited in Stanomir 2004ii, p.13). Consequently, in Communist mythology, historiography and political imagery “the hero is, above everything, an individual in permanent contact with the large popular masses” (Stanomir 2004iii, p.125) a genius that quintessentially represents the best qualities of his people. This formula also applies to the avatar of the intellectual. To conclude with then, the trajectory of the model intellectual involves a moment of going astray (if of healthy social origins) or a state of disease (if of unhealthy social origin) which is surpassed with the help of the unlearned from the masses (‘the living roots of life’) or through the assistance of fellow-intellectuals who are on the right path, through a method that involves self-critique and public confession. Aestheticism can tempt the intellectual into decadence, from forms such as nostalgia and defeatism to isolationism, mysticism and even open and active cultural resistance. Like in the case of the worker,

the saboteur, namely, the 'ideological saboteur', populates the opposite end of the hero-spectrum (idem, p.137). Ultimately, the mission of the intellectual avatar is to create model avatars for all other categories, supposedly not by creating fiction, but by visiting factories, construction sites etc. and accurately recording reality so as to construct ideal models for specific groups after these have been observed in detail: "In their capacity as 'engineers of the human soul', writers have the 'obligation and mission' to reconfigure the subjective world of social actors in such way that these will accept, will align themselves with and even aspire to matrixes of identity as these are redefined by the ruling power... Theoretically, the writer must instill in the soul of each and everyone a list of sentiments which embody the moral portrait as this is described in party documents" (Lungu 2003, cited in Cernat 2005, p.226).

The Humane Communist and the MDSS Man

Superimposed on the transition from oppressive governance towards a period of mild relaxation, and marking the transfer of power from Dej to Ceaușescu, a new avatar, that of the local party secretary, marks the limits of de-Stalinization in Romania (Stanomir 2004, p.335): "The district secretary, close to the people, preoccupied with the common good, is the first historical avatar of the new man" (p.337).

A path-breaker in theatre and literature "Power and Truth", the 1972 play by Titus Popovici (who, in partnership with Sergiu Nicolaescu also took a central role as film screenwriter) sets the model for how to exorcize previous abuses of Communism. The play advances three characters, Stoian (former party prime-secretary), Olariu (former chief of 'The Securitate') and Duma (current party prime-secretary) clearly

representative of Dej, Drăghici (Chief of Securitate and competitor of Ceaușescu for party leadership after the death of Dej) and Ceaușescu himself. Olariu's profile serves to describe and explain the presence of the abusive 'Securist' in the early phases of Communism. Olariu is undoubtedly devoted to the cause of the people, but in a fanatical and mystical way associating party devotion with party protection through the extermination of class enemies. Olariu is all emotion and little reason, and despite his pure motives, he deserves to lose his position and role in the Party because he has betrayed the generous ideals of the Communist Cause (rationality and humaneness) by committing abuses in setting up investigations. Similarly, the main difference between Stoican and Duma, equally committed to the cause of Communism, is based on the way in which they see and treat people: "Refusing to view the common man as means rather than end, tovarish Duma rediscovers the essence of party humaneness. It is about affirming the finality of the project, untarnished by abuses: the happiness of the popular masses" (idem, p.338). Ultimately, the interaction and dialogue between the current Prime-Secretary and his former mentor sets up the new avatar of the democratic Humane Communist ("Comunist de omenie"):

"Duma: Where did the break between you and people occur?

Stoian: Mind your own business! Who do you think you are enlightening?

Duma: I think I know. In the moment when you forgot that man is an entire world, not a simple bolt. A destiny and not a file.

Stoian: Stop with this gibberish. We do not have the time to explain to every Vasile...

Duma: Millions of such Vasile, as you call them, follow this party because, beyond the constructions, the sites, beyond everything we must do, they know that here something more important, something fundamental is being born. For which these people have a fabulous word, Humanity. The rule of Humanity” (p.339).

The “Golden Age” of the Humane Communist also introduces, in a new form, the humanist ideal of the Renaissance man, through the use of a new concept, namely, the man of the “multilaterally developed socialist society”: “The multilaterally-developed man is – actually – the communist, ‘proletarianized’ avatar of the Universal Man” (Cernat 2004ii, p.385). The ‘MDSS man’, the avatar of the common man, is formed as the subject constantly at the center of Party policy documents.

These are some examples, derived from analyses of cultural production during Communism, of the types of avatars the hero-mirror mechanism has engendered at different points in time. The capacity of the system to regulate the avatars for each social group (and across different types and situations) in ways so complex that it becomes impossible to decipher and deconstruct them completely is what gives the Communist system the appearance of its totalitarian character and what fixes its lasting legacy throughout post-communism. At the level of people’s imaginary, the Communist system was seen to inhabit everything, from conscience to gesture. And indeed, it tried to do so by constantly regulating and adjusting the mechanism of the hero-avatars, their roles and relationships, in order to instill certain traits, or inscribe certain messages and modes of reaction in the consciousness of different groups, in ways that responded to existent challenges at a particular time.

Targeted were not only specific age and social groups but also any sort of identity profiles that could be rendered accessible to the influence of an avatar: the peasants, ethnic groups, women, the ecologists, football club-supporters, parents and children, romantic lovers, the rebellious youth, friends, enemies, heretics, the discontent, those outside the country's borders, and even the ruling family (Cernat 2004i, p.371).

Moreover, the mirror-mechanism of the hero was employed not only as a mode of structuring cultural production but also as a way of reordering the public space (anyways state owned). Alongside cultural avatars that operated through arts, media and policy discourses, a flurry of portraits [like the ones with Ceaușescu which covered the walls in every office or classroom, or the historically falsified photo that places the presidential couple in the middle of a huge anti-Nazi manifestation in 1939 (Stanomir 2005, p.12)], statues (like the ones where Ceaușescu is depicted alongside other historical figures representing the 2000 years of national history), or other symbols of gigantic heroic achievement (such as the 'People's House,' now Palace of the Parliament) served as visual imagery suggesting the ubiquitous Presence of the Party and its Leader.

More than an ever-present set of images serving the internalization of a Panopticon like outside gaze, the hero-mirror mechanism took on a very personal role as it involved discourses together with specific mechanics of the body – from oratory, to proceedings in party meetings and in festivities [like the manual stories about the pioneer festivity of receiving the red tie during which the pupil is pledging: “At this moment now, I commit myself to serving endlessly and undeterred, the people, and to always be ready (to serve) the cause of the party” (Cernat 2004iv, pp.251-252)], to giant marches of the masses carrying and voicing banner-inscribed slogans (for example “Ceaușescu-

heroism/Romania-communism!” (Manolescu 2004ii, p.217), and, finally, to the amazingly complicated mass choreography that marked any national celebration.

This is how Verdery describes the impact of the celebration of a historical national hero, such as Horea (executed on the breaking wheel for his political stance), whose peasant uprising from 1784 was seen to prefigure the Communist revolution:

“A third vital element of the festivities was that they showed the state’s control over Time, not only through displaying its power to control the past (and therefore the present) by parading a redefinition of history, but also through proving its capacity to expropriate the time and effort of others. The occasion was a magnificent display of the state’s ability to gather up Time from living persons and redistribute it to the dead. By mobilizing the bodies of so many children and parents, who waited for hours in the cold, by compelling people to procure rationed flour and sugar and to provide the time and labour necessary for making the cakes, together with the hours of drill implied by the impressive synchrony of the children’s recitations: by all this, people’s bodies were informed of their subservience to a defining power. The celebration quite literally embodied history and subordination as aspects of people’s daily existence. With all this, Horea and his connection to power, state and Nation became lodged in these villages and schoolchildren at a level more profound than the one touched by their television shows or memorized textbooks: he and all he implies were lodged in their very bones” (Verdery, 1991 p.242).

This is not to suggest that the common communist man's soul was inhabited by the avatar-like constructions surrounding him, but their presence and circulation was, nonetheless, remarkably ubiquitous and continuous.

The Roots of the Mirror Mechanism⁴⁰

As just shown, the idea of a hero-mirror mechanism operating with different avatars results entirely from a combination of readings from the collaborative project of 'Explorări in Comunismul Românesc, I, II,' (which later also included Cernat et al., 2004i) academic exercise best described as pertaining to the area of "post-communist cultural studies." Interdisciplinary ["politology, history, anthropology, literary history, sociology, ethics" (Cernat et al. 2006, ¶ 28)], focused on unearthing types of cultural productions/Communist propaganda largely 'neglected' or 'forgotten' during post-communism [literary, quasi-literary and non-literary texts such as "comic books or presidential discourses, film scripts or 'books of wisdom' for pioneers, laudatory texts, patriotic and revolutionary poetry, popular novels, new folklore, etc." (Cernat et al. 2004, Vol. I, p.7)] and with a hermeneutical methodology emphasizing connections with the self and the autobiographical, this project can be said to explore the multitude of heroes created by propaganda across the diversity of the cultural landscape.

⁴⁰ The previous section has just explored the reach and depth of the mirror-mechanism. This section attempts an archaeology of the mirror-mechanism in order to give more background and a more explicit theoretical formulation to a concept that is central throughout the rest of the dissertation. It constitutes a necessary detour (because of its length and not because of its topic), but one without which the rest of the dissertation could still be read, although at a considerable loss of perspective. It reflects the importance of the fact that, at times, a particular moment in the trajectory of research must be considerably expanded upon, or zoomed in (to capture a different level of depth to which the proces of knowledge has skipped briefly), before proceeding any further.

If these are the beginnings of an inchoate idea/hypothesis, its later development/confirmation comes from an analysis of cultural discourses in Romanian communism revealing the hero-mirror device as a common basic feature and, in fact, as the possible depiction of an underlying cultural/governance mechanism. To this extent, therefore, the notion of the hero-mirror mechanism appears mostly as an effect of the analysis of cultural discourses pertaining to Communist Romania. However, there are good reasons for arguing that such a mechanism is confirmed not only at the level of Russian Communist culture and, in particular, in its doctrine of socialist realism, but also, as an important characteristic of Platonism and of pre-Communist Russian culture. Step by step, therefore, this section traces the notion of the mirror-mechanism across such domains to a point of origin that is ultimately posited within the realm of religion and theology. The importance of this exercise derives from the necessity to understand why or how such a mechanism has been so central to Romanian Communism, and also as a way of verifying that the hypothesis of the mirror-mechanism is a valid one to entertain. Amongst other things, an important implicit comparison is established between the Romanian Communist avatars of the mirror-mechanism and the Russian ones as seen through their underpinning discourses.

The Mirror-Mechanism and Kotkin's "Theocracy"

It seemed a good idea, as part of an approach that mostly situates the mirror-mechanism at the level of cultural discourses and ideology, to commence with something different, that is, with an analysis of Stalinist material culture. Exactly such an analysis, based

largely on primary sources, is offered by Kotkin's (1997, p.365) historical reconstruction of a utopian project imagined, constructed and administered as a "real life Stalinist microcosmos," i.e., the city of Magnitogorsk.

Kotkin's (p.293) account of the Socialist state reveals a "bifurcated political system" in which party and state agencies constantly parallel and overlap each other. This dualism is manifested in the "nongovernmental yet omniscient status" of a Party legally listed as a "public organization" but also empowered to lead both party and state organizations (p.294). Its origin lies with the central role given to the Party in leading the revolution and, soon after, with the 1918 Trotsky-issued practice of having Party structures ("political commissars") 'shadow' all other state agencies (from the army to "the judiciary, schools, industry, trade unions, soviets, and government") (p.292) in their dangerous transition from a bourgeois to a socialist order.

The question that Kotkin (p.292) poses, and whose answer is of great relevance here is, therefore, the following: "Soviet Russia had a government, Sovnarkom, and state organs, the soviets, so why did it need a parallel structure of party organizations?"

On the one hand, Kotkin (pp.292-293) seems to argue, this dualism had emerged from the past practice of "shadowing": "whereas the state's role was defined in terms of competent technical and economic administration, the party's was defined in terms of ideological and political guidance" (pp.292-293). On the other hand, "shadowing" had systematized the practice of "loyalty verification" of personnel designated for key appointments in administration, practice that was extended to both industry and the local government after 1923 (idem). Dualism played, therefore, an essential role in

maintaining and administering an ever-expanding human resource apparatus: “Using the nomenklatura mechanism, the party functioned as an ever-expanding personnel machine, placing Communists from its appointment lists in positions of responsibility throughout industry or government, or requiring those already in such positions to join the party” (idem).

As Kotkin (p.293), observes, however, the reasons for the existence of the “party-state” dualism went deeper than the need for ‘political guidance’ and the practice of appointments. As the main carrier of the ideology of the system the party itself had to become a body to be organized, trained, disciplined, assessed and examined in certain ways and to certain purposes. Naturally, both aspects derived from the practice of ‘shadowing’ mentioned above were increased. The party had to be trained, committed and up-to-date with all aspects of ideology and its personnel had to be continuously scanned and assessed at each level. In other words, the party, as a body or organization, had to be constantly re-formed to meet its ideological role. What then, was its ideological role, and what were the practices through which it was being constantly re-formed?

Partiinost

The answer Kotkin (p.293) gives to the first part of the question is that the party’s role was not to replace factory administrations or local governments but to “imbue such bodies with *partiinost*, or party spirit, by which was meant a historical and political understanding derived from ideology.” For Kotkin, this is enough reason to refer to the

party as a “church” (pp. 296, 337) or “spiritual guide” (p.298) and to the party-state as a “theocracy” (p.293). In my opinion, Kotkin cannot be faulted for this view. How else to make sense, even if transposed in a Western scenario, of a class of managers operating on bodies parallel to those of the state, based on a single but extremely prescriptive ideology, representing the main or only party in power and its leader, and whose main and sole duty is to offer ideological oversight? Nothing could resemble more the dualism of a Church-state system.

In addition, as ‘party-mindedness’ or ‘party-spirit’ the notion of ‘partiinost’ resembles more the definition of faith than that of scientific reasoning or of another type of rationality. The same stands even if defined as “the perception of reality from class positions” or as the expressing of views and assessing of events “in accordance with Marxism-Leninism” (Loeber 1990, p.93). It cannot be conceived as some type of procedural or tacit knowledge because it relies on clear ideological texts. It also cannot be conceived as some type of interpretative or hermeneutical exercise (of texts) because it relies on an inner predisposition and requirement to anticipate, and on a need to reflect, the manner in which ideology is constantly reinterpreted and reinvented at the center of the system. In other words, its subject must constantly study, incorporate and internalize the ideological interpretations given by the center, or the ‘authorized interpreter’ of Marxist-Leninist ideology, so as to second-guess, distribute and reflect into society at large the specific ideological prescriptions the center itself would have allotted to any given situation: “Every citizen, but especially party members, had to measure his or her thoughts and actions against the goals and pronouncements of the party leadership” (Kotkin 1997, p.294). This uncomfortable and constant tension

between loyalty and reason cannot be easily classified as anything else but ‘faith’. That ‘partiinost’ has been defined as a type of conduct or state of mind that captures or accurately reflects the spirit of the party cannot be considered a coincidence. In this definition, it must be emphasized, the concept of ‘partiinost’ corresponds well to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism, which shall be reproduced here in full: ‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good (-in this context, the prescriptions/commandments/principles of the moral/social order elaborated by the Party).’

Practices of Purification

However, in order to imbue other bodies with partiinost or party spirit, the party, as one body or structure, had to first fully acquire or reflect it. This regulation of the body of the party was achieved through procedures that Kotkin describes at large, particularly in the case of Magnitogorsk. To be brief, these will be described as the movement of personnel alongside the entry-exit dimension characteristic of human resource management. Entry into the ranks of the party was a complex procedure which started with a full confession regarding one’s background and personal history, and one which would be repeatedly called upon as a means of checking on one’s credentials and future testimonies: “A prospective member had to be recommended by current members, make a full confession of his or her (presumably appropriate) social background and life history, and go through an apprenticeship as a ‘candidate’ before being welcome into ‘the ranks’ and taking on the ‘high title’ of a ‘Bolshevik’ and ‘Communist” (p.295). Once formed, the

body of the party had to undergo successive evaluative operations. These were conceptualized as operations of ‘purification’ and involved the practices of ‘purges’ (‘chistki’), ‘verification’ (‘proverka’) and ‘self-criticism’ (‘samokritika’). “To maintain what was called the ‘purity’ (*chistota*) of the ranks,” Kotkin (p.295) for example observes, “period ‘purges’ (*chistki*) were undertaken.” It is important to acknowledge that Kotkin views these practices both in relation to the city of Magnitogorsk and at the general level of Stalinist culture. Similarly, these are conceptualized as distinct practices originating from the center of the government, with each corresponding to a particular period of time. In the case of Magnitogorsk, the first purge starts in April 1933 and, though scheduled to end in November 1933, continues until May 1935 when the first ‘verification’ takes over. The first verification is completed in the summer of 1935 but the whole procedure is restarted at national level by September 1935. This second ‘verification’ is still ongoing in 1936 when it is replaced by a third type of ‘verification’ involving “the exchange of old party cards for new ones” (p.310). This third ‘verification’ is officially completed by August 1936, but it is soon followed, in November, by a campaign of “vigilance against spies and wreckers” (currently referred to as a ‘campaign of terror’ or ‘the terror’) that lasts until the end of 1938. This last phase centers, more than the rest, on the internal party practice of ‘self-criticism.’

Purges

The practice of purges is depicted by Kotkin (p.300) as a public form of self-examination through which the party-member opened himself to the scrutiny of the party: “One by one party members were called in front of an ad hoc commission formed

by the representatives of local party leaderships. Approaching the front of the room, Communists placed their party cards on a red-draped table and, with portraits of the party's leaders in the background, recited their political biographies and prepared to answer questions. Commission members, occasionally joined by an audience of invited 'party activists' and the 'nonparty mass,' then explored the depths of a Communist's political sophistication and sometimes challenged the veracity of the autobiographical presentations. ...Moreover, in the buildup to the purge, special receptacles had been installed inside all institutions for the collection of signed or more often anonymous testimony about the Communists in that organization. No party member could be certain of what the commission had managed to find out or might ask. The atmosphere in the hall could turn hostile or friendly, depending on the disposition of the commission toward the particular party member before it." As a result of this procedure more than 2000 members, "predominantly from the rank and file," were excluded from the Magnitogorsk Communist party (p.301). Those expelled from the party but wanting to be reinstated, as well a large number of those not expelled, "were required to offer public acts of repentance, or 'self-criticism' (*samokritika*)" and to undertake serious improvement of their political education (p.301).

'Verification'

In terms of its unfolding as an event, the practice of 'verification' is presented as akin to that of the purge, except for its lack of a public audience: "At the interrogation itself, which like the purge began with the placement of one's card on the table but unlike the purge was without an audience, the questioning could become intense. Statements made

by each member during the first verification, the 1933-1934 purge, and other occasions were compared, as party members' biographies, and the way they had been previously reported, became potential traps" (p.307). However, there were important differences. The practice of 'verification' relied on a much more complex network of information, pulling documentation from different periods, diverse organizations and from multiple locations, in addition to the knowledge generated locally. It aimed at "record keeping" (p.302) and it did so by seeking to recapture the entire historical dimension of one's biography before and after entry into the party. Secondly, its aims were not only to expose and expel "alien people, deceivers of the party" (First Secretary Khitarov 1935, cited in Kotkin 1997, p.308), like in the case of the purge, but also the "illiterate and passive Communists" (p.309). Unlike the purge, therefore, this practice of 'purification' also aimed at mobilizing, at instilling a "renewed activeness (*aktivnost*)" and at reviving the party's spirit, in other words, at increasing the amount of "internal party work and party mass work" (p.309). Last but not least, for party officials the consequences of 'verification' posed the real threat of arrests and imprisonment by the NVKD (the secret police).

'Self-criticism'

Such risks were the norm during the campaign for the search of spies and wreckers (inside and outside the party) triggered in 1936 first by the Moscow trial of "oppositionists" such as Trotsky, and then, by the Novosibirsk trial for "industrial sabotage" (pp.311, 316). Here, several aspects merit consideration. Firstly, this campaign made central a practice that had already been in use from the time of the first

purge, i.e., of ‘self-criticism’ and employed it wider: “To the ‘double-dealers’ and concealed ‘oppositionists’ holding party cards were added ‘wreckers’ and ‘spies’ among industrial managers and engineers, along with ‘bureaucrats’ and ‘toadies’ in the party apparatus who suppressed self-criticism, the all-important weapon for unmasking” (p.332). At its core, ‘self-criticism’ presupposed the offering of a ‘public act of repentance’ but with the aim of disclosing or denouncing an existent but hidden reality. Thus, the practice could embody self-criticism as well as the denunciation of others, the idea being that the public airing of such matters in party meetings would increase accountability and “‘unmask’ concealed internal enemies” (p.316). To combine personal self-criticism with the denunciation of others might seem incongruous, but the distinction fades away if we perceive of the actual entity engaged in ‘self-criticism’ as the collective organism of the party. “Self-criticism” should be viewed here, therefore, not only as a practice at the level of the individual, but really as a practice at the level of the party. Kotkin’s (p.328) account reveals how this practice was so revealing of shortcomings that after such a party meeting in Magnitogorsk most officials from the city and the regional party committee were arrested, with some even being executed. This feeds well into another aspect concerning ‘self-criticism,’ namely, that in the carrying out of this practice the party role was overshadowed by that of the NKVD, which, normally from the shadows, operated the link between ‘self-criticism,’ arrests and executions. “By one incomplete official reckoning,” Kotkin (p.344) reveals, “in 1937-38 seventy ‘leading officials’ in Magnitogorsk were executed and another fifty-seven were sent to labor camps. These were substantial numbers (a July 1936 list of the top factory management personnel (nachalstvo) carried only fifty-four names.” In other words, the quest for purification was ending in the “party’s self-immolation” (p.293), i.e., the party itself was being

sacrificed as part of the procedure. This aspect is captured well by Kotkin (p.298):

“Predictably, a self-declared vanguard organization that was also a movement founded on iron discipline, absolute purity, and supreme personal sacrifice had a difficult time remaining true to its own ideals. But try it did, laying the basis for the terror.” At this point, only one thing remains to be said. According to Kotkin (p.336) the NKVD’s insistence on obtaining confessions “derived from the nature of the crime the NKVD sought to expose and eradicate: counterrevolution.” In other words, the crime being traced was “a state of mind” opposed to the revolution and which could have or could have yet not been expressed into action (p.336). As Kotkin (p.305) also remarks, the same argument applies to the practices of purging, verification and self-criticism, all of which rely on forms of ‘confession’ to capture “the suspect’s true inner thoughts” as somehow “contrary to the ‘revolution’” (p.336). Kotkin (p.305) finds that through these procedures, charges were brought forward “for a kind of thought-crime analogous to medieval heresy” and that this led to a treatment of party members that went well beyond that extended to ‘heretics’ at the time of the Inquisition (pp.336-337): “The imputation of double-dealing would have made no sense in the absence of the party’s obsession with orthodoxy as well as the appearance of unanimity, an obsession that was made operational by Stalin’s relentless drive for power. But orthodoxy and unanimity could have become necessary only because the party’s authority was based on absolute claims, meaning that even a single dissenting voice became dangerous as the potential ground for an alternative orthodoxy. Such were the implications of the party’s church-like status which every Communist, especially those who disagreed with specific party policies, had to confront, and which almost always elicited their capitulation.” Thus, at

the end of this line of reasoning, Kotkin identifies the party with the Inquisition and the NKVD with the supporting secular arm of the state (*idem*).

Conclusion

It is clear from the above that Kotkin's account of Stalinist material culture fits well with the notion of the mirror mechanism. Envisaged as both a conscience and a model for the rest of society, Kotkin constantly refers to the party as a 'spiritual guide' carrying what is, ultimately, a purely ideological mission. This is not a metaphor but a characterization based on the material and political practice of party-state dualism. Also at this level, the party is described as an entity having to undergo certain procedures in order for it to attain to that key state of spirit referred to as 'partiinost.' In other words, the party appears as a Logos receiving its ideological mission from on high, be it from the party-leader or from within the realm of history itself. At the same time, the mandate of the party is to distribute this ideological awareness within society at large, so that each and all can partake of the same 'partiinost' and become transformed by it, i.e., become 'new men'. The party, therefore it can be said, acts as an intermediary mirror seeking to reflect a higher reality onto the plane of human existence. Kotkin acknowledges this point while emphasizing how the party itself was constantly overwhelmed by the immensity of the task or ideal, which it, however, could not give up. This depiction clearly places the party as central to the hero mirror-mechanism. However, the party, like also the individual party-member and the common Socialist man, is not simply a receptacle into which 'party-mindedness' flows. The party, as the individual man, must

undergo certain continuous procedures and operations in order to develop the capacity to mirror such a higher reality. That these practices are referred to as ‘purification’ again fits extremely well with the mirror-mechanism. In fact, when analyzed at the level of the party as either entity or individual, the practices of ‘purging,’ ‘verification,’ and ‘self-criticism’ feature exactly as self-sacrifice, or ‘self-immolation,’ which clearly corresponds to the first axis of the mirror-mechanism: ‘the myth of the hero [here, the party as both an entity and the individual party member], ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself (People, Party, History).’ That the notion of ‘partiinost’ itself corresponds to the second axis of the mirror mechanism has already been discussed. Using terms developed in the last chapter of this section and hinted at in the methodology section, it could be easily said that while ‘partiinost’ corresponds to the theological concept of ‘imitatio Dei’ and thus to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism, the practices of ‘purification’ correspond to the theological notion of ‘kenosis’ and thus to the first axis of the mechanism. There is, also, another level of specificity to add to this. If seen as a ‘public form of self-examination’ involving ‘public acts of repentance’ the practices of ‘purging’ and ‘self-criticism’ come pretty close to the notion of ‘exomolegesis’ as discussed by Foucault (see subsection entitled “*The Christian Apparatus of Pastoral Power and the Hero-Mirror Mechanism*” of the Methodology chapter). In similar manner, ‘verification,’ and in particular, the emphasis on confession that runs through all the practices of purification, fit well with Foucault’s notion of ‘exagoreueusis.’ Both the notions of ‘exomolegesis’ and ‘exagoreueusis’ feature as a model of renunciation of the self that fits, it has been shown, with the first axis of the mirror-mechanism and the concept of kenosis. Another way to put this is that the three practices of ‘purging,’ ‘verification’ and ‘self-criticism’ match closely the key

Christian practices of self-examination and confession, which Foucault refers to as ‘technologies of self.’ Through such correspondences, and others which can be established between the notion of party as ‘spiritual guide’ and the model of ‘pastorship,’ between ‘partiinost’ and the ‘money-changer’ metaphor for the constant examination of thoughts, or between the function of pastorship as oversight of each and all and the inclusiveness of the Communist welfare state, the ‘theocracy’ of Kotkin can be seen to resemble and fit with the Christian apparatus of pastoral power described by Foucault, and, therefore, with the mirror-mechanism.

The Mirror-Mechanism and Plato’s Philosophy

In a sense, similar claims can be advanced in relation to Plato’s philosophy although it would be hard to suggest that consensus exists in how any part of his work has been interpreted. Nevertheless, there are three ways in which the mirror-mechanism could be investigated as part of Platonic thought. “Plato,” as Potolsky (2006, p.15) observes, “provided the first and unquestionably the most influential account of mimesis.” Plato’s negative account of mimesis and art, however, stems from a certain ontological perspective in which all the objects of physical existence are presented as a series of more and more imperfect copies of some eternal and unchanging essences, that is, of the Forms. Mimesis, as Plato seems to argue, “reflects ‘something that is like the being, but is not being’ (Plato 1991: 279)” (idem, p.23), and, as is the case with the imitation of a flute in a painting, contains no knowledge of what is being represented (p.24). The problem of mimesis seems to be then that it does not produce intellectual knowledge

about the being of what it imitates. This notion of negative reflection, however, has its counterpart in a notion of reflection that is positive: “Or do you think that someone can consort with things he admires without imitating them? I do not. It’s impossible. Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can” (Plato 1992, p.174). Different from mimesis, this act of reflection concerns the act of intellectual contemplation through which the soul ascends to the realm of Ideas and reunites with them, or partakes of their reality, based on an original resemblance or “kinship” (Louth 2007, p.3). The idea of reflection applies here because in the same way in which the physical sun makes it possible for human beings to visualize it, the Good makes it possible for the human mind to have knowledge of it: “What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things. ...So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also the object of knowledge” (Plato 1992, p.182). Following on this, it would seem possible to argue then, in a language reminiscent of Ficino (2009, p.31), that when the mind approaches the light of the Good it becomes illumined with “divine blessings,” that is, it becomes the recipient of (and indeed one with) the virtues or Forms mirroring the Form of Good (Louth 2007, p.3).

It is in relation to these two types of reflection or imitation (negative and positive) and in relation to the larger ontological view that makes them possible that the mirror-mechanism can be envisaged as part of Platonic thought. The connection between

Platonic ontology and the notion of reflection is well captured by Clark's (1981, p.146) delineation of "the Neo-Platonist element in High Stalinist epistemology": "Ordinary reality was considered valuable only as it could be seen to reflect some form, or ideal essence, found in higher-order reality." However, this begged the question of how one world could be elevated into the likeness of the other, or rather, of the type of agency that could mediate between these two worlds and effect such a transformation. Plato's answer to this problem of ontological mediation is unequivocal. Only the philosopher, i.e., the one who has attained to the Sun of Reality via contemplation, is able to bridge this "cleavage" between "otherworldliness and this-worldliness" (Lovejoy 2001, p.24): "The vision of the Good and the Beautiful, of the source of true reality, enables one to understand how all true reality fits together" (Louth 2007, p.15). And from here on, bestowing upon the class of philosopher-kings, or guardians, the attributes of Logos is just one step away: "But only after the philosopher has contemplated God, who rules the heavens, will he, and he alone, be able to rule the earth in god-like fashion" (Ficino 2009, p.31).

With Plato then, the philosopher-kings become the translators of the divine Forms into principles of human governance, and in that sense, the god-like force shaping the human world according to the divine pattern. The world in its entirety must mirror the consciousness achieved by the class of philosopher-kings, a consciousness supposedly mirroring the divine. In this principle, it can be recognized, reside not only the foundation of the mirror-mechanism but also the future Leninist notion of the

dictatorship of the proletariat⁴¹. This constitutes the first claim regarding the connections between Platonic thought and the idea of the mirror-mechanism.

The second claim concerns the figure of Socrates as the actual embodiment of the hero-mirror mechanism in both its axes. “To escape [evils or injustice], Plato asserts in ‘Theaetetus,’ “is to become like god so far as is possible and to become like god is to become just and holy, together with wisdom” (Plato, cited in Sedley 1999, p.312). As Sedley (p.313) argues then, not only is the “ideal of godlikeness” central to Platonic thought and to the figure of Socrates, but in this case, it consists of mirroring the five “cardinal virtues” of “justice, moderation, wisdom, courage, and holiness.” This, it will be observed, corresponds to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism. As for the first axis of the mirror-mechanism, it can be easily distinguished in Socrates’s decision to sacrifice his own life (a sort of “judicial sacrifice” according to Bloom 1983, mins.15-16) in the name of philosophy, of following the divine command of his god and of promoting the greatest good amongst his fellow-citizens (Plato 1994).

Last but not least, if following the negative type of reflection discussed by Plato, that is, his account of mimesis, we find that “The Republic” employs the mirror device as a comprehensive governance mechanism. As Taylor (1999, p.281) observes, Plato’s ideal state has “an all-pervasive ideology” which reproduces itself both as the ruling ideology and as the ideology legitimizing the ‘aristocratic state’ in front of the masses. This ideology is inscribed in the system of education that is passed on from generation to

⁴¹ “All political decisions are made by the guardians without any reference to the citizen body. The guardians, moreover, are neither elected nor removable from office by popular vote. Politically, their power is absolute...And finally the locus of political power is identical with the source of the ideology, viz. the intellect of the guardians. The knowledge of the Good which is the most precious possession of that intellect determines the content of the ideology, which in turn provides the justification for the power which that intellect exercises via its knowledge of how Good is to be realized” (Taylor 1999, pp.281-282).

generation and despite their absolute power, the guardians themselves are “under an absolute moral obligation not to allow any deviation” from it. This is so, Taylor explains (p.282), because “innovations in music and poetry (i.e. in education) gradually spread to affect people’s character and behaviour, their personal relations, and finally laws and constitutional forms ‘until in the end they overthrow everything both public and private’ (424d-e).” What Taylor (1999) fails to mention, however, is that the mechanism through which artistic or educational innovation can result in the demise of the aristocratic state (and the best form of human government) is one based on mimesis: “Both discussions of mimesis in the Republic begin by defining and criticizing artistic mimesis, but end with considerations about the safety of the republic and the ‘regime’ of the soul” (Potolsky 2006, pp.27-28). Plato’s specific discussions of mimesis concern the artistic image, poetry, the telling of stories, the education of the youth and the impact of tragedy, but when taken together these are taken to impact the very “nature of humanity” (idem, p.29) and of human society. Why then, is mimesis “a danger to the republic” (idem)? At a general level, this has to do with the definition of mimesis as a negative type of reflection or imitation. Mimesis emphasizes pleasure and the emotional at the expense of reason, the false over the true, appearance over the real, the excessive over the ordered, and the unnecessary over the essential (idem pp.18, 20). Its danger resides in its drug-like “power to circumvent reason” and to turn “ethical training into a matter of automatic and unthinking imitation rather than rational choice” (p.20). Artistic images, for example, present only “the physical appearances of things, not their rational truth” and appeal to our senses rather than to reason, thus introducing confusion in the soul (pp.22, 28). Moreover, they direct the soul towards appearances and away from the real: “A mirror reflection might prompt you to look at the thing being reflected; an imitation

keeps your eyes on the copy alone” (Pappas 2012, 4. *Imitation, Inspiration, Beauty*, para. 1). On the other hand, mimetic narrators (imitating “the character in voice or gesture”) or poets, as well as actors, are inherently liars hiding their true character behind someone’s else, and thus opening up possibilities for deception (Potolsky 2006, pp.20-21). Moreover, through imitation, they “take on the qualities of the characters they describe,” which results in the fragmentation of their own personalities (pp.21, 28). This line of thinking continues with stories, where Plato maintains that “artistic imitation inevitably begets behavioural imitation” reason for which children (the future guardians) should have access only to certain “approved tales” and forms of behavior (p.19). Finally, tragedy has it in its nature to encourage audiences to identify with emotion and suffering: “It is easier to imitate violent emotion than rational contemplation. Emotion is noisy and visible, while the prudent individual is difficult to understand from without. Much as the painter imitates what a couch looks like rather than what it is, so tragedy only shows what human character looks like from the outside” (pp.26-27). Tragedy stirs the emotions and by allowing the audience to suffer “along with the hero” it produces amidst its ranks both “sympathetic imitations” of the hero and the pleasure of expressing emotion in the context of everyday life (p.27). This creates imbalance and division in the soul, for “[r]ather than being ruled by reason, we are now ruled by emotion,” and that constitutes a major threat to the city: “And if you admit the sweetened muse in lyrics or epics, pleasure and pain will jointly be kings in your city instead of law and that argument which in each instance is best in the opinion of the community” (Plato 1991, cited in idem).

Such are the dangers of mimesis described above that Socrates responds to them “with political acts” such as “official censorship and exile” (p.27). It follows then that “Plato’s theory of mimesis,” as Potolsky (p.29) correctly observes, “is very much a theory of political life” based on the notion that “political power lies in the control of images.” In other words, Platonic mimesis has not only an exclusionary function, of censorship, banishment and exile, but also, and more essentially, a constitutive one. The aristocratic state, it can therefore be affirmed, is based in its mode of governance (and ideology) on the regulation of mimesis. It relies heavily on a mechanism which extracts or manufactures certain types of images to be circulated and mirrored within society, while editing, banning and censoring others: “Socrates wants to control both the subject of the tales, and the way (and by whom) they are told (p.19).” Nothing could come closer than this to the notion of the mirror-device and its acting as a governance mechanism.

The Origin of the Mirror-Mechanism in Communism and in Russian Culture

Through the idea of mimesis, the mirror mechanism links to the entire history of Western thought, both in terms of philosophy and art. However, despite the usefulness of these larger considerations in relation to philosophy, art and religion, the more fundamental question remains unaddressed: what is the origin of the mirror-mechanism in Communism? Or, put another way, why did the mirror-mechanism resurface as a central governance mechanism during Communism? Why did a Communist system select a cultural mechanism borrowed from religion and Platonic theory as its key mode of governance?

By ‘cultural mechanism’ I refer here to the mirroring device through which the regular individual partakes of the divine qualities of the Logos/Absolute in order to become in its image (conversion) and thus become engaged in the building of a new civilization that will reflect the divine pattern. This is easily understood in terms of Christ and Christianity, but has also been indirectly applied to the Communist Party through the notion of “impersonal charisma”: “Charisma is typically associated with a saint or with a knight, some personal attribution, and what Lenin did was remarkable. He did exactly what he claimed to do: he created a party of a new type. He made the party charismatic. People died for the party. It’s as if people would die for the DMV. Most people don’t get too excited about the Department of Motor Vehicles because it’s a bureaucracy” (Jowitt 2000, ¶ 5). What Jowitt is referring to, of course, is Lenin’s drastic distinction between the party and the proletariat, which led to the Leninist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletariat, Lenin affirmed, could only receive a revolutionary consciousness from the party. This idea that without the party, the proletariat could never advance beyond a bourgeois consciousness, that “a spontaneous workers’ movement” was “incapable of developing a socialist consciousness,” “that the interests and aims of a social class, the proletariat, can and indeed must be determined without that class having a say in the matter,” (Kolakowski 2005, pp.668-669) was a radical departure from Marx. From the notion of a “vanguard, leading the working class and imbuing it with socialist consciousness,” the party soon proclaimed itself the sole repository of consciousness, a sort of Logos whose total acceptance by the proletariat implied a divine type of charisma (this corresponds to Vico’s image on page 166). From this point of view, the mirror-mechanism can be thought of as the device through which charisma was being bestowed upon the party (no such device is mentioned by Jowitt). In

Platonic terms, Lenin had identified the Party and its consciousness as the ontological mediator between ‘higher-order reality’ and ‘ordinary reality.’ With Lenin’s “What Is to Be Done?” (1901), the party elite had come to replace the class of “guardians.”

This can be expressed another way. If the Party is responsible for bestowing consciousness on the proletariat that means that the act of governance requires by very definition the shaping of collective consciousness. For governance to work through the altering of consciousness some type of cultural mechanism must be presumed. The mirror-mechanism, it is claimed here, can be understood as that presumed cultural mechanism.

In general terms then, the origin of the mirror-mechanism (or the immediate reason for its re-emergence during Russia’s Communist period) lies with Lenin’s refashioning of the role of the party, i.e., with his concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, the matter is not all that simple, as what guides the formulation and functioning of the hero-mirror mechanism, throughout its many phases and through its manifold features, is a tapestry of influences that relate to Russian culture as a whole. In this sense, what is needed for uncovering the hero-mirror mechanism is an archaeology at the level of Russian socialist culture.

The following is my attempt to provide a limited archaeology⁴² of the hero-mirror mechanism in the Russian cultural space by recourse to three bodies of work dealing

⁴² I do not intend to refer here to Foucault’s archeology, which is both a specific methodology and a historical discourse in itself. This chapter, as discussed in the Methodology section, relies on a methodology distinctly opposed to that of Foucauldian archeology, meaning, that of the history of ideas. The metaphorical use of the term ‘archaeology’ is apt here because it refers to the surveying of books and themes as the surveying of layers in continuous succession and linkage with each other, and also because the search attempted concerns a point of origin.

with the question of Socialist Realism. In chronological order these are, “The Soviet Novel – History as Ritual” (1981) by Katerina Clark, “The Total Art of Stalinism” (1988) by Boris Groys, and “The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic 1890-1934” (1999) by Irina Gutkin.

The assumption underpinning this discussion is that the hero-mirror mechanism of Russian origin becomes more and more visible in the Romanian cultural space with the onset of the Communist period. This assumption seems justified judging by resemblances in the literary conventions of Socialist Realism in the works of Clark (1981) and Negrici (2010), but until the emergence of literary (or cultural) research that closely compares the two traditions, its validation remains in question. Even if refusing to acknowledge such an assumption, however, the following discussion of the roots of the mirror-mechanism in the Soviet space has the merit of expanding and adding concreteness to the general idea that the mechanism had originated with Leninist thought. This could be useful provided that the functioning of the mirror-mechanism in the cultural space of Romanian Communism cannot be entirely dissociated from the logic and manifestations of the same device in Soviet culture.

The Hero-Mirror Mechanism and Clark’s “Master-Plot”

Although not a source of inspiration, the work of Clark (1981) on the Soviet novel has more in common with this thesis than almost any other work encountered. This is so for two main reasons. Firstly, both exercises attempt to isolate, via an inductive methodology that is at best quasi-structuralist, some type of pattern or mechanism as

central to Communist culture/politics. Secondly, because in both cases the argumentation proceeds by an examination of how diverse reflections of this pattern succeed themselves almost continuously in the field of culture during Communism. While both works look at ‘texts,’ it is in relation to the object of study and the optic adopted that difference sets in. Whereas Clark’s work looks at novels from a perspective that situates the plot as the essential feature of the text, this study examines cultural discourses in a manner that emphasizes character over plot. What is it then, that a study of the plot could tell us about a study of character? Could it be possible that one would confirm the other?

In what follows, the discussion of Clark’s study of the novel will follow the pattern set out in her book: firstly, the notion of the ‘master-plot’ will be delineated, and secondly, this notion will be discussed in terms of different phases/periods in the historical development of the Russian novel.

“The biographical pattern”

Clark (1981, pp.3-50) defines socialist realism pragmatically as “a canonical doctrine defined by its patristic texts” and then proceeds to construct “a single master plot” based on the commonalities of plot extracted from the “official ‘model’ novels” of the Socialist era. This effort results in the identification of two points of convergence, which essentially give the structure of the “master-plot.” The first aspect that Clark (p.44) identifies as a common feature of most canonical works is “the informing scheme of human biography that underlies each work and has its roots in Marxist-Leninist

historiography and revolutionary lore.” The Socialist novel, Clark thus argues, revolves around the unfolding biography of some kind of positive hero. However, this type of biography is of a very specific type. In it, the “Socialist Realist hero... is actually so deindividualized that he seems closer to a figure in one of the various genres of the Old Russian written tradition that tell the virtues of some positive figure (p.47).” “His image,” Clark (*idem*) maintains, “is reminiscent not only of hagiography, which tells of a saint’s religious virtue as illumined in his life,” but also of the “secular virtues of princes” documented by the chronicles of old, and, as such, it appears to function simply as the illustration of a set of fixed standards about what constitutes the ideal human life: “Whether the text told of a saint or a prince...[i]f actual historical figures were chosen as subjects, the details of their lives were pruned, embellished, or even ignored in order to make the subject fit the conventional patterns of the virtuous life.” The point that Clark (p.50) is trying to make here is that the scheme of human biography in the Socialist Realist novel is so “formalized” that its heroes attain an “essential timeless guise” and become the embodiments of myth. In other words, ‘deindividualization’ in the Soviet novel produces a type of description in which heroes are “depersonalized” and “reduced to a function of their roles” which, in turn, elevates these “roles” into the realm of myth or legend, arranging them into a kind of archetypal pattern (p.58). And as Clark suggests, when these “roles” are viewed in their unfolding, that is, as a sequence of “formulaic phases” of the plot (p.11), the biographical pattern reveals the formula of the master-plot (p.44).

That the Socialist Realist novel produces such a biographical pattern can be related to three causal factors mentioned by Clark. The first has to do with the Socialist ideal to

produce a literature both internationally recognized and accessible to the masses (p.42), that is, a “popular,” at most “middlebrow,” type of literature (p.xi). The wish to create a “literature of essential essences, accessible to all,” then, is one factor responsible for the mythical, parable-like structure of the biographical pattern (pp.36-37). The second factor relates to the “modal schizophrenia” of the Soviet novel, which Clark (p.37) defines as “its proclivity for making sudden, unmotivated transitions from realistic discourse to the mythic or utopian.” Here, the Neo-Platonism of Stalinist epistemology, with its demand that “every event of the present time” derive its significance from “identification with a moment either from the official Heroic Age or from the Great and Glorious Future,” acts as another source of the biographical pattern: “Fictional, historical, and actual experience were homogenized insofar as they all tended to be refracted through the lens of myth to form one of the archetypal patterns” (p.40). Finally, the last factor concerns the main ideological source for the plot in a Communist society. As Clark (pp.9-10) observes, the Soviet novel works “as a sort of parable for the working-out of Marxism-Leninism in history” with the life of the positive hero recapitulating “the stages of historical progress as described in Marxist-Leninist theory.” Here, the Marxist-Leninist vision of historical progress selected to structure the Socialist novel is a specific one: not “the transition ... from a class society through proletarian hegemony and on into that ultimate state, the classless society, i.e., communism” but “the working-out of the so called spontaneity/consciousness dialectic” at the level of individual biography (p.15).

The spontaneity/consciousness dialectic

Together with the ‘scheme of human biography’ this dialectic constitutes the second point of convergence between the canonical works of Socialist Realism, and as such, forms the second essential feature structuring the master-plot. In Leninist terms, historical progress is driven by “a dialectical struggle between the forces of ‘spontaneity’ (which predominate in the earliest, most primitive social forms) and the forces of ‘consciousness’ (which are present from the very beginning, although largely only as a potential)” (p.16). This process takes the form of successive “higher-order syntheses (‘leaps forward,’ or revolutions) resulting in ever-higher forms of both ‘spontaneity’ and ‘consciousness,’” until “a final synthesis, which resolves the dialectic once and for all” is reached at (idem). In this final stage, “consciousness” triumphs but in a form in which it is no longer “in opposition to ‘spontaneity’” and “the age-old conflict between the individual and society” is resolved (idem). The Soviet novel, as Clark argues, is shaped by this view of historical progress, which is, nonetheless, expressed in individual and not in class terms. In relation to the master-plot then, the ‘spontaneity/consciousness dialectic’ refers to the individual (human being) being portrayed as moving from a state of spontaneity (“willful, anarchic or self-centered” self/actions) to one of consciousness (a state of “political awareness and complete self-control” in which “the hero achieves greater harmony both within himself and in relation to society”). This is summarized by Clark (pp.16-17) as follows: “The great historical drama of struggle between the forces of spontaneity and the forces of consciousness is unfolded in a tale of the way one individual mastered his willful self, became disciplined, and attained to an extrapersonal identity (pp.16-17).” “[T]he Socialist

Realist novel,” it can thus be concluded, “might in effect be seen as a politicized version of a Bildungsroman (idem).”

In relation to this dialectic, Clark develops two interrelated discussions, both essential to the master-plot and both revolving around the issue of terminology. Here, Clark (pp.17, 20) starts by noting that the spontaneity/consciousness binary emerged in “the voluntarist/determinist controversy” (the question of whether historical change is effected by “necessity”/“transpersonal forces” or “deliberate actions”/“self-consciousness”) of the first Russian Marxist groups. The question of how a Communist revolution could be achieved in a predominantly agrarian country like Russia was, of course, answered by Lenin in 1902 with the “doctrine of the vanguard” (p.18). Lenin himself believed that in time, after the revolution and after the masses had become more ‘conscious,’ the vanguard of the proletariat as well as the state would “progressively ‘wither away’ as Marx had stipulated” (pp.18-19). This never materialized and by the time of Stalin in the 1930s (when the master-plot becomes formed), the party had started to face uneasy questions about this from “detractors in the left-wing movement” (p.19). The function of “apologist” for the Party befell the domain of literature and this led to the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic being introduced in the master-plot: “instead of providing edifying tales about the class struggle, official Soviet literature generated myths for rationalizing the Bolshevik position in the perennial radical controversy over the roles of consciousness and spontaneity in history. ...The Socialist Realist tradition began with parables (such as *Mother*) illustrating the workings of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, but, under Stalin, extra conventions were added to

the master plot so that it also affirmed symbolically that the progress to communism was specifically assured under the present Soviet leadership” (p.19).

Nevertheless, Clark warns, one should not give undue weight to this single view, as the reasons for the structure of the master-plot can be both political and cultural in nature. Lenin’s depiction of the dialectic of historical progress as structured around the two poles of spontaneity and consciousness, while relying on the conceptual vocabulary of the early Russian Marxists (1890s), does not exist as such in Marxism (where the dialectic is envisaged as one of “freedom” vs. “necessity”). This change in terminology, Clark (pp.20-21) argues, shows that Marxist ideology could not escape being “colored” by Russian culture and, thus, becoming “more and more the ideology characterizing a certain branch of the Russian radical intelligentsia.” While the term “soznatel’nost” (consciousness) related to one’s conscience and “could hence be associated with the intelligentsia’s tradition of assuming the role of Russian society’s conscience,” “stixijnost” (spontaneity) referred to the “elemental,” both as “wild, uncontrollable ‘forces’” (human or otherwise) or as something “natural” (not artificial) and therefore, “good” (pp.21-22). When these two terms were put together, the resulting binomial structure came to represent not only “the existential dilemmas of the Russian intelligentsia” but also “one of the key binary oppositions in Russian culture, comparable to, for instance, the ideal/real opposition in Scholasticism or the subject/object distinction in the nineteenth-century German thought” (idem): “The opposition suggests, for instance, that much-celebrated gulf in Russia between the vast, uneducated peasant masses (the ‘spontaneous’) and the educated elite (the ‘conscious’) or, to put it slightly differently, between backward rural Russia (the realm of

‘spontaneity’) and modern urban Russia (the realm of ‘consciousness’), or, again, between those seething masses, capable of spontaneous popular uprisings, and the autocratic, heavily bureaucratized, and hierarchical state, which seeks to control these masses and direct them. The spontaneity/consciousness opposition can also be seen as a schematization of some aspects of the old Slavophile versus Westerner controversy, i.e., the question whether the way forward for Russia could be found in Western models and ideas, in bringing reason, organization, order, and technology to this backward, anarchic country, or whether Western civilization was sterile and spiritually impoverished as compared with the native Russian or Slavic ethos, which was antirational, spontaneous, instinctive, perhaps even antiurban and against state order.”

The mirror-mechanism and the general definition of the “master-plot”

Having discussed both “the biographical pattern” and the “spontaneity/consciousness dialectic,” we are now able to relate to the definition that Clark (p.16) gives to the master-plot: “As is generally true of ritual forms, the master plot personalizes the general processes outlined in Marxist-Leninist historiography by encoding them in biographical terms: the positive hero passes in stages from a stage of relative ‘spontaneity’ to a higher degree of ‘consciousness,’ which he attains by some individual revolution.” The same discussion of these two terms also illuminates some of Clark’s major claims about the importance of the “master-plot,” as well as acting as a platform for evaluating if any correspondences can be established with the notion of the mirror-mechanism.

Clarks makes four important claims in relation to the “master-plot”: 1) that its main function is similar to that of a ritual (p.9), that one can in fact identify it with Socialist Realism, i.e., “in order for a Soviet novel to be Socialist Realist, it must replicate the master plot” (p.6), that more than just the result of Leninist/Marxist discourse, it represents “the literary expression of the master categories that organize the entire culture” (p.14), and finally, that, as a cultural formation, it antedates the emergence of the official discourse of Socialist Realism (“the pre-Stalinist novels which became the cornerstone of Socialist Realism” being published before the end of 1927, that is, much before the 1932-1934 period of administrative centralization of Soviet literature) (p.43).

Already at this general level some important similarities can be established between the “master-plot” and the mirror-mechanism.

It is a striking coincidence that both the mirror-mechanism and the “master-plot” (here particularly with regard to the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic) are identified as having their Communist origin in Lenin’s introduction of the notion of the ‘vanguard of the proletariat’ (or his version of ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’). If in the case of the mirror-mechanism, the notion of the “vanguard” had granted the Party the Logos-like function of bestowing “consciousness” on the proletariat, in the case of “the master-plot” this is taken even further. The process of bestowing consciousness on the proletariat is dominated by the Party actually transmitting this very exact vision of its own special role in history. This occurs subtly by the adoption of the concept justifying the Party elite at the level of Marxist/Leninist theory, i.e., the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, into the structure of the Socialist Realist novel. Thus, the Soviet novel becomes a ritual-like literary illustration of the doctrine of the “vanguard” in everyday life, that is, of the

Party's constant function in the binary opposition between spontaneity and consciousness. The notion of the "vanguard" is, thus, not only the theoretical standpoint that provides the Party with a Logos-like function, but also the very image constantly produced for the imagination of the masses via the medium of the novel, in this case, by providing a biographical tale about an individual moving from "spontaneity" to "consciousness" under the guidance of the Party. All of this stands in agreement with the idea of the mirror-mechanism as a governance mechanism.

The scheme of human biography, by producing such a deindividualized, depersonalized hero, reveals the persistence, in the structure of the Socialist Realist novel, of a formulaic set of fixed characteristics and roles associated with the virtuous profile of a mythical hero. Behind the protagonist of every Socialist Realist novel, therefore, lies an archetypal pattern. The formulaic hero betrays the presence of the archetype. In the end, what the Socialist Realist novel creates is not so much characters as avatars, that is, images of a central archetype. If the "master-plot" can be viewed as an archetypal pattern operating with avatars alongside a mythical/heroic dimension, then what can be distinguished in it is the mirror-mechanism. Moreover, it can also be said here that the scheme of human biography enforces the first axis of the mirror-mechanism.

The Socialist Realist hero is on a path of transformation that sees him move from 'spontaneity' to 'consciousness.' At the end of the novel, therefore, 'consciousness' is bestowed not only upon the main character, but also more essentially, on the reader. Inasmuch as 'consciousness' signifies a kind of political awareness that is also ethical and metaphysical, that is, a state in which the hero has found his true self (i.e., an 'extrapersonal identity') by achieving harmony with society (nature or the cosmos), it

can be said that the ‘spontaneity/consciousness’ dialectic corresponds to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism. Surely, that the two axes connect in the central image of the hero is confirmed by the fact that attainment of consciousness (harmony with the cause of social progress, and also self-transcendence) generally implies some form of “symbolic death” if not, in fact, the motif of martyrdom (pp.179-181).

The mirror mechanism and the historical development of the Socialist Realist novel

Both in terms of its Leninist origin, and its two essential components then, the master-plot can be seen to resemble or confirm the model of the mirror-mechanism. If this is true, both the specific permutations of elements triggered by the historical development of the Socialist Realist novel in the master-plot, as well as the other potential sources for its origin, are of interest to the archaeology of the mirror-mechanism. The cursory description of these elements will follow the historical development of the Socialist Realist novel according to the stages envisaged by Clark.

Pre-revolutionary fiction

That literature “must have more than aesthetic significance” and “the search for a ‘positive hero’” (p.251) that “should be ‘typical,’ should exemplify moral and political (or religious) virtue, and should show the ‘way forward’ for Russia” (p.46), are themes rooted in the great tradition of Russian literature from the 19th century (see Dostoevsky, Tolstoy etc.). Nevertheless, the Socialist Realist positive hero seems to be modeled more after the medieval texts documenting the life of a saint (hagiography) or a prince

according to a fixed, formulaic pattern (pp.46-48). Another influential strand, 19th century radical fiction (Chersyshevsky) was also modeled after religious writings and in it “[m]inimally, the revolutionary hero was expected to lead an ascetic life of extraordinary dedication and self-deprivation” (p.49). Nevertheless, because it was “too novelistic,” lacked a totalizing view of history, and its characters were not sufficiently deindividualized, pre-Bolshevik fiction never became hagiographic. It did not influence the Socialist Realist novel as a model but it provided it with three “symbolic patterns:” the idea of a political movement being envisaged as a “family,” the conversion pattern acted out by a master/disciple relationship, and the theme of martyrdom (pp.49-52).

Key sources of the master-plot (1906-1927)

The three exemplars, which together give the structure of the master-plot, are Gorky’s “Mother” (1906), Gladkov’s “Cement” (1925) and Furmanov’s “Chapaev” (1923).

“Mother” is hagiographic, that is, the positive hero resembles the image of the saint or prince in that it is depersonalized or sketched through “sparse, formulaic details”:

“Loving Christ [cf. revolution], loving towards his brothers, fair of face, with shining [svetly] eyes, and a stern [grozny] countenance, extraordinarily brave, good-natured [alternative translations of this epithet – serdcem legy – include ‘open’ and ‘simple’ in the positive sense], good [laskovy] to his men [actually, ‘retainers’], majestic, strong in mind, stands for truth, keeps himself pure in body and soul” (pp.58-59). “Mother” corresponds to Gorky’s “God-Building” period and as such it clearly interprets “consciousness” as enlightenment (p.66). Martyrdom, as well as the master/disciple pattern in the achievement of consciousness, is present here.

Unlike “the static, icon-like image of the revolutionary in *Mother*” embodying “consciousness,” “*Cement*” portrays a “dynamic” hero, all energy and action (p.66), a “warrior” achieving “fantastic feats” through his enormous powers of will (pp.73-75). In this regards, the hero of “*Cement*” is modeled after the image of the “bogatyř,” i.e., of the “mythical knight of the Russian oral epic or *bylina*,” and constitutes an emblem of the forces of “spontaneity.” While later criticized for being too “anarchical” and lacking the guidance of a master, *Cement*’s positive hero nevertheless constitutes the model for the Soviet novels of the 1930s and 1940s.

“*Chapaev*” very much resembles the plot of “*Mother*” except that its hero starts as “spontaneity incarnate,” and then, with the aid of a master, moves towards attaining “consciousness” (p.86). In effect, this provides not only a “formula for combining the different hero types of *Mother* and *Cement*” but also a modality by which to solve the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic at the level of the plot (p.86). The “master-plot,” therefore, originates at this junction between “*Mother*,” “*Cement*” and “*Chapaev*” (*idem*).

The first period of High Stalinism (1928-1931)

The time of intense industrialization and collectivization under the Five-Year Plan, this period is marked by a “vision of industrial utopia” which saw all aspects of life as “subsumed under ... the myth of industrialization.” Consequently, the machine became the main metaphor for society (one of order, progress, planning, control, technology and practical reason and in which enlightenment would be equally distributed all over the

land, thus bridging the gap between the urban and the rural areas), and this led to all individuals being portrayed as parts of the same “greater whole – the machine,” and as brothers united “for an all-out industrial effort” (pp.95-98). There was a cult of the ‘little man,’ of the everyday, of the prosaic, the practical task” (p.91) and the literature produced was “antiheroic, and mired in facts and statistics,” corresponding to the RAPP’s “proletarian realism” and to a “positivist age” (p.34).

The second part of High-Stalinism (1931-1944)

An important theme of the Five-Year Plan was “the struggle with nature” in which ‘the machine’ (i.e., technology) was to triumph over elemental forces (pp.100-101). The wave of reaction against the plan triggered by Stalin himself in 1931 replaced this scheme with “an epic struggle between man and the elements in which the machine often played no greater role than that of the trusty steed in a bylina” (p.101). The metaphor of the machine was thus supplanted with that of nature in two acceptations: as “a struggle with elemental forces” which, if won over through the power of will, would lead back to nature as a “garden of harmony” (pp.105, 111). With the demise of the machine, the ideal of a society of “brothers” or “little men” working in harmony (a horizontal mode of kinship), was replaced with the “Stalinist myth of the great family,” a vertical mode of kinship in which “Soviet society’s leaders became ‘fathers’ (with Stalin as the patriarch); the national heroes, model ‘sons; the state, a ‘family’ or ‘tribe’” (p.116). This had a double impact. On the one hand, a literature about “little men” was replaced with a literature about “fathers” and “sons” (p.129). On the other hand, the vertical mode of kinship led to an interest in differences between generations, which

translated into a concern with biography. However, this shifted from a focus on “reliable citizens,” to the production of an entire series of fantastic heroes representing a new order of humanity (p.119). Soon, all biographies became “standardized so that every subject’s life, in both fiction and non-fiction, fit mythicized patterns...” (p.123). This served to “rationalize the status quo and legitimate the current leadership” (p.122), but also, to create a new form of literature. The Soviet novel was to provide, above all, “an entire heroic biography to function as an example for others” (p.132). As both in fiction and non-fiction “all biographies were now fantastic,” (p.123) this meant literature had to be hagiographic (p.124). Two types of biographies were established: of “fathers” and of “sons.” The first kind was meant “to inspire the population,” the second, “to provide models for the populace to emulate” (p.124). There was a difference in the heroic status of these two orders: “Although all official heroes were of a truly extraordinary caliber, they were not all ‘equally’ ‘big’. ... the ‘biggest’ were model ‘fathers’ while the less-than-absolutely-extraordinary were model ‘sons.’” In this hierarchy, the model sons (such as the Stakhanovites or the aviator-hero) represented “examples of positive spontaneity,” while the fathers resembled Stalin, i.e., someone with “comparable ‘wisdom’, ‘care’ and ‘sternness’ to guide the chosen sons to consciousness (p.129).” The sons were constructed after the image of the ‘bogatyř’ - who was not only a man of “amazing feats,” but “daring” and a “rebel” (p.138). In this age of “idealism verging on mysticism” the achievements of the Stakhanovites were described as “qualitative leaps forward” (the notion suggested that history progresses through leaps, or revolutions). The same way water could undergo a qualitative change (of boiling) simply as a result of quantitative changes (being heated), the same way the human could make the leap and become superhuman: “All those paragons of the new master race, the symbolic heroes,

were said to make such a leap, figurative or actual, and thus go 'higher' (p.137). The Neo-Platonic epistemology of the High-Stalinist era established an ontological distinction between those with access to higher truth and those without. This scheme posited the existence of two worlds, a higher and an ordinary one, and only those with access to the first could lead. For both the chosen "fathers" and "sons," "the ultimate criterion" was thus "epistemological." "That Lenin had access to higher-order truth was axiomatic in this period" (p.142) while the "main source of all the thirties symbolic heroes' 'knowledge' came ex post facto (after the feats) in encounters with Stalin at the Kremlin." Any qualitative leap forward had to be motivated by knowledge derived or obtained from the embodiments of Logos, i.e., "those supraterrrestrial beings, Lenin and Stalin" (p.142). Only the "fathers" had full access to the higher-reality (p.141) and this ensured a sort of "apostolic succession": "Lenin passed his 'light' and 'mystery' on to Stalin. Now Stalin was passing it on to his chosen few" (p.145).

The post-war Stalinist years (1944-1953)

This period was one of cultural conservatism rehearsing the same themes of "the elements, fathers and sons, bogatyri and so on" but also motifs belonging to the "machine-age" (p.191). Many forties novels were modeled after "Cement" and contained motifs from the 1930s such as "Arctic or taiga explorers, aviation heroes, the sufferings of prerevolutionary Bolsheviks in prison and exile, and Stakhanovites" (p.192). Nevertheless, literature saw several types of changes being introduced. The cult of the symbolic heroes made way for the veneration of culture and for the rise of the cultural hero: the Stakhanovites entered the temple of science (p.195). Concerned with

establishing “priority in scientific discoveries,” Soviet Russia thus replaced its superheroes “from aviation, production, exploration, etc.” with heroes that “tended to be scientists, inventors, scholars, and creative people generally” (p.195). After a speech from Zhdanov, the idea that the Soviet man returning from the 2nd World War had achieved a ‘qualitative leap forward,’ that is, he had become a new man, was also introduced into literature. Thus, the Soviet novel returned to the motif of the war-hero, to his exceptional feats and transformation. At the same time, corresponding to the rise of the technocratic classes, the image of the hero performing super-human feats was attenuated for one of the hero able to achieve the most difficult of human administrative tasks. “The forties hero was a leader and an organization man” and his main task was to perfect himself in the art of leadership (p.201). Last but not least, Soviet writers began to undermine the Party’s attempts to reduce the private life of the individual to that of his public life and duties by deliberately introducing the theme of adultery in relation to their main characters (p.208).

The Khrushchev Years (1953-1964)

The function of biography as a mode to legitimize the Communist leadership continued despite the death of Stalin and ‘de-Stalinization.’ The Stalinist government had provided only a “false” instance of leadership (distorting “consciousness”) but, this time, true consciousness was present in the new leadership (p.212). After the fifties, the death of Stalin was followed by a reaction against the values of “High Stalinism.” This led to the attempt of replacing “the cult of the titanic hero” with a cult of “the ordinary person as an individual” (p.215), one whose individual private life would be allowed to unfold

unhindered (p.216). However, the most 'dissident' novel of this period, "Not by Bread Alone," returned literature to the conventional hero of the High Stalinist era, particularly through "such salient traits of Stalinist culture as Promethean symbolism, the notion that there is a higher-order knowledge accessible only to the chosen few, and the myth of the martyred member of the intelligentsia" (pp.218, 220). At the same time, the attempt by the "communist idealists" to engage with the question of how "initiative and discipline – independence and compliance" (idem, p.221) could be reconciled, that is, of the ideal type of government, was made impossible by the response to the 1956 Hungarian uprising. After the public denunciation of Stalinist abuses, the leadership's attention to issues of human dignity "was hailed as a "new 'humanism'" (p.224). Writers were able to discuss the deportations, the excesses of collectivization, Stalin's failure to prepare the country for the 2nd World War and, later, even the camps. In the late '50s and early '60s, a reaction took place against what was perceived as the excessive liberalism of the post-Stalin era and a return was made to the Heroic Age. The "fathers" "sons" link had been severely disrupted by Stalin's heavily discredited image. Thus, the presumed angst of the youth of the post-Stalinist era was given direction through the emergence of the "youth-novel" (p.226). Its plot unfolded, like in a typical Stalinist novel, along the path from spontaneity to consciousness. Like in a fairy tale, here the hero "makes a journey from the profane world (the false) to a higher reality (the true)" (p.227). The youth-novel hero leaves Moscow or Leningrad and his 'false' family and friends behind (almost instinctively), and discovers consciousness (himself, a true love and a true 'family') in "the provincial town, factory, construction site, or kolkhoz" (p.227) and in the value of work.

Fiction after 1964

The heroes of the youth novel now remain in their metropolis and end up being engaged in social deviant behavior: “[t]hey never went anywhere and never found any wholeness” (p.232). With the rise of the “new prose” (a literature about “alienation, disintegration, confusion” and “fractured psyches”) it seemed that “the attempt at a ‘heroic revival’ had failed (pp.232-233), but it was not to be so. For diverse reasons this new wave of experimental literature was dwarfed by other waves. The literature of destalinization and the Neo-Stalinist literature that sought to oppose it, fall in this category. Clark (p.236) observes that those writers seeking to oppose the Stalinist values often ended up re-articulating their own values by use of the same Socialist Realist conventions. This applies not only to the literature of destalinization but also to that of samizdat and tamizdat: “Most ‘samizdat’ and ‘tamizdat’ publications (other than manifestos, articles, or light reading matter) are either memoirs or fictional exposes of Soviet oppression (the camps, detention of dissidents in mental hospitals etc.) or contain critiques of Soviet society presented from a religious or some other traditional Russian (as distinct from Soviet) point of view. As far as form goes, they are not markedly different from the sort of writing published in the Soviet Union. They also resemble official literature in being heavily didactic” (p.235). “Byt prose” departed from the Stalinist models by depicting the “moral quagmire” (death, divorce, neglect, and human frailty) of everyday reality, and by leaving its characters without a moral guide or exit, trapped in their prosaic, imperfect life. On the other hand, “village prose” posited that “spiritual regeneration” could be found far away from Moscow, in the village, i.e., where nature as ‘a garden of harmony’ could be found (p.242). The myth of the ‘garden

as harmony' was presupposed, in Marxist and Leninist theory, to materialize with the construction of a Communist society. Now the intelligentsia seemed to return to the same myth "with a sense of loss," keen to roll back the time to a moment when acceptance of God could have led the way (p.245), somewhat ready to discard Stalinism, but not its mythical structure.

What does this history of the Soviet novel tell us about the mirror-mechanism? Firstly, it indicates possible sources in the medieval texts documenting the lives of saints (hagiography) and princes, in folk or popular literature (the bogatyr), in 19th century literature (the injunction that literature must transcend the aesthetical) and, particularly, in the outlook of the 19th century Russian intelligentsia: "The longing for a Gemeinschaft world and the nostalgia for the world of 'nature,' the source of so many incongruities in High-Stalinist fiction, are in fact common sentiments of the old Russian intelligentsia, as are the ideals of the martyr-hero and of historical self-transcendence" (p.252). Secondly, except for a very short period at the beginning of the Stalinist era (the period of the Five-Year Plan), the literature of the period, in its many phases, reflects, in mostly a very strong way or sometimes in an attenuated fashion, the type of conventions that confirm the mirror-mechanism. Considering that Romania's turn to Communism occurred in the time of Stalin, this would confirm the idea that the model of the mirror-mechanism became central to this culture because of Russian inspiration. Finally, Clark reveals an extraordinary array of sources, influences, and phases for the "master-plot," which span from the political and economical to the religious and cultural. In all this complexity, the pattern described by the "master-plot" manages to retain its central place (even if sometimes as only a spectral presence) throughout the Socialist Realist period,

also because different forms of opposition to the Stalinist values tend to rely on the same mythical structure. This would seem to make the task of delineating an archaeology of the mirror-mechanism, or a full description of its phases and functions, extremely complex if not practically impossible. However, it is such a task that must be attempted in order for the period of Socialist Realism to be understood in some orderly fashion.

The Mirror Mechanism and Groys' "Total Art of Stalinism"

Although methodologically different from the “interpretive cultural history” provided by Clark (1981, p.xiii), Groys’s study (1988) similarly attempts “to establish a conceptual pattern by which the internal evolution of Stalinist culture may be understood (idem, p.13).” As such, “The Total Art of Stalinism” represents another project that can be seen to closely resemble the type of work undertaken in this thesis. In short, Groys (idem) proposes, in a work that is a lot more theoretical than historical, a “cultural archaeology” able to explain the evolution of avant-garde, Stalinist, and post-utopian art via the same conceptual structure.

The Avant-garde art

The Russian avant-garde, Groys (p.14) argues, can be defined by “a single formula,” that is, the “demand that art move from representing to transforming the world.” When spread out, this formula reads as a conceptual structure based on two types of visions, one derived from the thought of Solov’ev, and the other, of Nietzschean inspiration.

From Solov'ev, the avant-garde inherited four important concepts: 1) that humanity is facing an impending apocalypse from which it can save itself by choosing to organize society, in all its aspects, so as to reflect the divine principle in its entirety – if achieved, this would reveal an “apocatastasis,” i.e., it would make apparent the state of grace that had been enveloping all things from the very beginning of existence (p.19), 2) that achieving this required the “true understanding and organization of life” (Solov'ev 1988, cited in Gutkin 1999, p.7), that is, “an all-embracing theory” or “a general plan for the transfiguration of the existing imperfect reality into a new ideal life” (idem) – this is reflected in Malevich's (1968, cited in Groys 1988, p.17) assertion that “[e]very form of a spiritual world that is created should be built according to a general, single plan” with “no special rights and liberties for art, religion or civil life,” 3) that the function of art is to be “life-building,” (Solov'ev 1966, cited in idem, p.18) that is, to implement this plan of universal salvation [even if this implies art subordinating its autonomy to “a single universal purpose,” i.e., to “something higher than any temporal goal, namely, the transformation of the world as a whole” (Groys 1988, p.29)] 4) that artists had to embrace this demiurgic role, both in its vision and in its implementation, that is, to “become priests and prophets” not only “possessed by a religious idea” but also able to “consciously control its earthly incarnations” (Solov'ev 1988, cited in Gutkin 1999, p.11).

Nietzsche's inspiration can also be summarized in terms of three interrelated themes: the death of God, the will to power and the idea that “the building of a new world... can only be justified aesthetically” (Groys 1999, p.4). The impact of the death of God on the avant-garde is described by Groys (p.14) as follows: “The intrusion of technology into

European life in the nineteenth century caused this picture of the world to disintegrate and gradually led to the perception that God was dead, or rather that he had been murdered by modern technologized humanity. As the world unity guaranteed by the creative will of God disappeared, the horizon of earthly existence opened, revealing beyond the variety of possible forms of this world a black chaos – an infinity of possibilities in which everything given, realized, and inherited might at any moment dissolve without a trace.” This black chaos, “that nothing toward which...all progress was moving, which coincided with the primordial substance of the universe, or in other words, the pure potentiality of all,” is represented in the famous black square paintings of Malevich (p.16). From these, “‘Victory over the Sun’, in which the sign of the black square first appeared, reproduces this ‘murder of the sun’ and the falling of a mystical night in which is ignited the artificial sun of the new culture and new technological world” (p.65). It is not then that the avant-garde artists chose to be destructive or nihilistic, but rather, that they regarded “the destruction of the divine work of art that had been the world” as an irreversible process: “If the avant-garde followed Nietzsche’s maxim to the effect that what is falling should still be pushed, it was only because it was deeply convinced that the fall could not be broken” (p.15). Similarly important, it was perceived that the death of God had left an empty place, which now had to be occupied by some human agency ready to assert the power of creating a new reality. The avant-garde artists felt called upon to hasten the destruction of the old world, then, also because they thought it inevitable that this “would be succeeded by the single total project of reorganizing the entire universe, in which God would be replaced by the artist-analyst” (p.10). In Nietzschean terms, therefore, the avant-gardist artists responded to the death of God by asserting their ‘will to power.’

Malevich believed that the suprematist artist could recover the “subconsciously operating mechanisms” embedded in the harmony of the world before its destruction by technology, and could learn to “control them consciously” (p.16). In other words, that he could control, organize and harmonize some “hidden stimuli” present only at the level of the subconscious, so as to create a new world and a new humanity (p.17). Similarly, Khlebnikov “assumed that the ordinary forms of language concealed a purely phonetic ‘transrational’ language that worked secretly and magically upon the listener or reader” (p.18). Calling himself “Chairman of the World” and the “King of Time,” Khlebnikov believed he could reconstruct this “language of the subconscious,” and, that this would in turn grant him “the ability to organize the whole world on a new audial basis” (idem). When, after years of civil war and the October Revolution, it was thought that that “zero point” of the black chaos had been finally reached, the avant-garde artists moved on to change the world not only through contemplation of the subconscious but, more directly, through material means (p.21). “The constructivists themselves,” Groys (p.22) remarks, “regarded their constructions not as self-sufficient works of art, but as models of a new world, a laboratory for developing a unitary plan for conquering the material that was the world.” Later, when “the most active radical wing of the avant-garde, the Lef” moved away from constructivism, it did so to embrace “‘productionism,’ that is, the production of utilitarian objects and the organization of production and everyday life by artistic methods” (p.24). While initially the constructivists saw themselves, in relation to the Bolsheviks, as the only ones supposed to lead and implement the plan for the total reorganization of the society, over time, both the constructivists and Lef agreed to submit to political power as long as their aesthetical project was to be implemented (pp. 22, 24). Groys (p.21) sums up the overall position of the avant-garde as follows:

“Avant-garde artists, on the other hand, to whom the external world has become a black chaos, must create an entirely new world, so that their artistic projects are necessarily total and boundless. To realize this project, therefore, artists must have absolute power over the world—above all total political power that will allow them to enlist all humanity or at least the population of a single country in this task. To avant-gardists, reality itself is material for artistic construction, and they therefore naturally demand the same absolute right to dispose of this real material as in the use of materials to realize their artistic intent in a painting, sculpture, or poem. Since the world itself is regarded as material, the demand underlying the modern conception of art for power over the materials implicitly contains the demand for power over the world. This power does not recognize any limitations and cannot be challenged by any other, nonartistic authority, since humanity and all human thought, science, traditions, institutions, and so on are declared to be subconsciously (or, to put it differently, materially) determined and therefore subject to restructuring according to a unitary artistic plan. By its own internal logic, the artistic project becomes aesthetico-political. Because there are many artists and projects and only one can be realized, a choice must be made; this decision is in turn not merely artistic but political, since the entire organization of social life is dependent upon it.”

Stalinist art

As exemplified above, Groys (p.26) goes at length to emphasize that it is because of the logic of its own aesthetical-political project that the avant-garde renounces its position of creator of reality in favour of the political force capable to implement such a project.

Stalin's era, Groys (p.34) therefore affirms, represents the fulfilment of the avant-garde project: "The avant-garde's dream of placing all art under direct party control to implement its program of life-building (that is, 'socialism in one country' as the true and consummate work of collective art) had now come true. The author of this program, however, was not Rodchenko or Maiakovskii, but Stalin, whose political power made him the heir to their artistic project."

At this point it becomes clear that the 'conceptual pattern' that Groys employs throughout his study is nothing else than the motif of the Demiurge. This is what defines the avant-garde movement, the Stalinist era, the purges and the character of Socialist Realism. The source of the avant-garde project, Groys (pp.64-65) argues, is "in the mystical, transcendental, 'sacred' sphere," and is, "in that sense completely 'irrational:'" "The avant-garde artist believed that his knowledge of and especially participation in the murder of God gave him a demiurgic, magical power over the world, and he was convinced that by thus crossing the boundaries of the world he could discover the laws that govern cosmic and social forces. He would then regenerate himself and the world by mastering these laws like an engineer, halting its decline through artistic techniques that would impart to it a form that was eternal and ideal or at least appropriate to any given moment in history." Consequently, when Stalin inherited and chose to continue the artistic project of the avant-garde, "the predicates of the artist-demiurge were transferred to the political Leader" (p.63): "The moment the avant-garde artist's position is occupied by the party leadership and the real figure of 'the new individual, the rebuilder of the Earth,' the avant-garde myth becomes a subject for art, and the figure of the avant-garde

demiurge breaks down into the Divine Creator and his demoniacal double –Stalin and Trotskii, the ‘positive hero’ and ‘the wrecker’” (pp.62-63).

Socialist realism, its positive and negative heroes, as well as the purges (pp.61-62) can be best understood, therefore, as the expression of “demiurgic forces” at work in society: “The art of socialist realism, therefore, is not realistic in the traditional sense of the word; that is, what it provides is not a reflection of worldly events in their worldly contexts and motivations, but hagiographic, demonological, and other such depictions of transcendental events and their worldly consequences. It is not for nothing that socialist realist aesthetics always speaks not of ‘portraying’ positive or negative heroes, but of ‘incarnating’ them by artistic means. In and of themselves the positive and negative heroes have no external appearance, because they express **transcendental demiurgic forces** [my emphasis]. However, to demonstrate these forces in a manner that is ‘intelligible to the people’ (‘the people’ here meaning not actual consumers of art but mortals who lack transcendental vision), they must be symbolized, incarnated, set upon a stage. Hence the constant concern of socialist realist aesthetics with verisimilitude. Its heroes, as is stated in certain of the quotations cited above, must thoroughly resemble people if people are not to be frightened by their true aspect, and this is why the writers and artists of socialist realism, constantly bustle about inventing biographies, habits, clothing, physiognomies, and so on. They almost seem to be in the employ of some sort of extraterrestrial bureau planning a trip to Earth – they want to make their envoys as anthropomorphic as possible, but they cannot keep the otherworldly void from gaping through all the cracks in the mask (p.63).” In these conditions, the artistic criterion of partiinost (partymindedness) refers not only to “the ability to intuit new currents among

the party leadership,” but, more essentially, to the “ability to anticipate the will of Stalin, who is the real creator” (pp.51-52). For in the end, “[t]he mimesis of socialist realism is the mimesis of Stalin’s will” (p.53).

Post-utopian art

The post-utopian demands on art are described as follows by Groys (p.115): “Left to themselves today, artists and writers must simultaneously create text and context, myth and criticism of myth, **Utopia** and the failure of **Utopia**, history and the escape from history, the artistic object and commentaries upon it, and so on.” The primary merit and characteristic of “sots art” (a term resulting from the combination of socialist realism – ‘sotsrealism’ and pop art, but which denotes the postmodernist art developing in Russia in the 1970s) in this context, is that it acknowledges it cannot be purified from a will to power (which Western postmodernist art does not), and it sets out to “make this identity the central object of artistic reflection, demonstrating hidden kinship where one would like to see only morally comforting contrast” (pp.10, 12): “The goal now is to analyze this aesthetico-political will to power, which artists acknowledge to be primary in all artistic projects including their own (p.81).”

Conclusion

The visions of Nietzsche and Solov’ev that motivate the avant-garde, and then constitute the essential character of Stalinist art (including socialist realism) and post-utopian art can be described through one motif: that of assuming the function of the Demiurge, of

inhabiting the Demiurge. In other words, what emerges as the central issue, or “conceptual pattern,” of this entire period is control of the mirror-mechanism, of the apparatus of Logos. Whoever controls this mirror-mechanism can ‘become’ a substitute for Logos, and therefore unleash ‘demiurgic forces’ in his own image (or can choose to describe and partially deactivate the mechanism itself, revealing its functioning and effects, both from within and outside of it – like the exponents of ‘sots-art’ did). These ‘demiurgic forces’ can be the positive or negative characters of Socialist Realism, or, in effect, an infinite multitude of avatars or archetypes. That Stalin had engaged with the function of the Demiurge in this manner is clear from the expression of demiurgic forces both in literature and on the open scene of social and political life (the Stakhanovites and the purges are illustrations of this). Furthermore, as Groys (p.68) suggests, the function of the Demiurge can also be associated with the cult of Lenin: “Lenin’s mummy can at the same time be regarded as the model for the ‘incarnations’ of the socialist realist hero; the external ‘human’ wrapper is here merely that: a shell, a husk doomed by the demiurgic and dialectical forces of history that they may manifest themselves and then exchange it for another. Thus ex post factum it is Lenin, and not the avant-garde claiming the role, who is acknowledged to be the demiurge of his age.” In conclusion, to the extent that the mirror-mechanism is reflected in the problematic of the Demiurge and its central role in avant-garde, Stalinist and post-utopian art, Groys’s study would suggest that important roots for the mirror-mechanism are to be found in the Russian artistic avant-garde. Here, another study, by Gutkin (1999), comes to both contest and validate the importance ascribed by Groys (1988) to the Russian artistic avant-garde.

The Mirror Mechanism and "The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic"

In a critique of Groys (1988), Gutkin (1999, pp.4-5) argues that socialist realism emerged out of "an intellectual revolutionary paradigm" commonly shared by the political and the artistic avant-garde movements between the years 1890-1935.

Immediately, two consequences result from this definition. The first is that socialist realism stands identified with a "general worldview that guided Soviet civilization as a whole," an argument that can only be developed by the uncovering of links between the two types of avant-garde projects, and more importantly, between the aspects linking a general paradigm to a specific form of historical practice. While one cannot contest the reasonableness and necessity of such a perspective, Gutkin's study shows neither the clear-cut manner of argumentation of Groys (1988) nor the ability to link the general with the historically particular as manifested in Clark (1981). These limits, however, should probably not be imputed to Gutkin as much as to the difficulty of the subject. The second consequence is that socialist realism is envisaged as simultaneously both a political and aesthetic phenomenon (p.4).

In its shortest form, the 'intellectual revolutionary paradigm' is defined by Gutkin (1999, p.9) as "Russian intellectuals' quest for a theory of total knowledge and their search for redemption by aesthetic means." This paradigm is formed at the interaction of two "alternative utopian schemes for transforming reality" corresponding to the political avant-garde and, to the aesthetical avant-garde, respectively: "the 'materialist' Marxist-Leninist one," and "the one based in Solov'evan neo-Christian idealism" (p.9). Both these schemes, Gutkin (pp.8, 16) observes, had their origin in "Hegelianism," particularly in terms of identifying a "total organization theory of life." Marx

emphasized a form of “historical and dialectic materialism” which presupposed that the transcending of past modes of production through the vehicle of class struggle could reunite the producer with the means of production from which he had been alienated, and thus with the full humanity of himself and his oppressors. A blueprint for the rational organization of the entire society, Marxism posited that, once erected, “the materialist base of Communism” would wrestle control from nature providing humankind with the freedom to “fully realize its creative potential” (p.17). The ultimate purpose of Marxism, therefore, was the recovering of full humanity by all members of the human race, through the development of their creativity, so that “everyone in whom a Rafael lies hidden must have the opportunity to untrammelled development’ (Marx and Engels 1957, cited in Gutkin 1999, p.17). As Gutkin puts it (idem): “[t]hus, the task of the total transformation of the world was not an end in itself – the end was ideal humanity, freedom from economic material necessity, and most important, freedom to create.”

The account of Solov’ev’s thought that Gutkin provides is very similar to that provided by Groys (1988) and will not be repeated here except to emphasize that Solov’ev “envisaged total synthesis as the transformation of matter by the incarnation of a ‘supramaterial actant,’ or the ‘spirit,’ in the material realm” (p.17). This transfiguration of life implied the organization of “our entire reality” according to the divine principle (Solovev’s aesthetic theory allegedly described this principle in the form of “a universal theory of knowledge” which posited unity at different levels: of science, religion and philosophy, of the Churches, of church and state etc.) through the medium of art and the

agency of artists and poets; in this sense, art became ‘life-building,’ able to transform all life so as to re-create everlasting life on earth (pp.11, 17, 22).

Each of these schemes has to be expanded if the trajectory of socialist realism according to Gutkin is to be discerned, but the many connections between their constituent strands makes the whole exercise appear extremely complicated and potentially never-ending at times. Historically, the Marxist-Leninist scheme starts from Hegelianism, activating a strand of “Prometheanism” (with a clear aesthetical orientation) and the notion of a unified plan for the reorganization of the whole of society which runs from Fourier’s doctrine (p.8), through Saint-Simon and his notion of the creative role of ‘les industriels’ and of the artists in revolutionizing society (p.10), to the “utilitarian aesthetic of the radical realists” such as Chernyshevskii (who offered moral criteria for “the organization of daily existence” under the form of fiction) (pp.8, 41, 83), and through to the Marxist theory which finds its ultimate Russian form in Lenin’s notion of the “vanguard party...organizing the consciousness of the Russian emerging proletarian class in a predominantly peasant country” (p.10). This scheme, then, gives the cultural tradition of the Russian political avant-garde and transfers a demiurgic role to the political elites.

From here, things become more complex. For example, the “god-builders” movement of Lunacharskii and Gorki (p.19) together with Bogdanov’s “comprehensive epistemology” of all branches of knowledge (including aesthetics) and his ‘empiriomonism,’ seeking to overcome “the duality of spirit and matter” so as to create “a supreme human being fit to live in the ultimate human collective” (p.23), can be ascribed between or within both schemes. Ultimately, the same can be said about Bogdanov’s inspired ‘Proletkult’ organization, about the Smithy poets and about the Association of Proletarian Writers

(RAPP), all movements emphasizing “the proletariat’s messianic culture and historical role,” partly the reason for which they were all eventually disbanded by either Lenin or Stalin (pp.26, 45).

Historically, the Solov’evan scheme starts with Hegelian idealism and then connects with and reinterprets the philosophies of Fedorov and Nietzsche through the encompassing “theurgy” of Solov’ev (p.42). The influence of this scheme is obvious in the aesthetics of the symbolist movement, of the Futurists, and of the Left Front and the production art movement (constructivism) – which together form the aesthetical avant-garde. Through it, artists receive “the metaphysical authority to create the ideal future world” (p.18). Gutkin proceeds to discuss each of these groups, highlighting the contribution made by each to the aesthetical discourse that would become socialist realism.

The symbolists (Merezhkovskii and Belyi, for example), Gutkin argues, sought to transform imperfect reality into an “ideal future community in which all will become demiurges” through “the creation of a new artistic language” (p.18), seeing themselves in the process as direct competitors to the political revolutionaries (p.27): “In other words, the symbolists esteemed an artist who, rather than merely depicting or imitating reality, organized and transformed the physical and psychic matter of this world according to the ideal order of future reality revealed to him now in an afflatus. The true artist had to be someone with a vision of universal design” (p.43). Drawing on the theurgy of Solov’ev, the symbolist artist had, therefore, to be able to read “the ultimate reality of the ideal future” (“realiora”) within “the ordinary reality of the everyday life in the present (“realia”)” (p.42).

Less involved with actual politics, the futurists (Khlebnikov, Maiakovskii and Malevich, for example) most clearly “posited the artist or aesthete (rather than the political leader or the proletariat itself) in the messianic role” (p.25) as the “maker[s] of the human soul” (p.52): “Taking an even more fiercely antimimetic stance than their predecessors, they strove to do this in their art either by ‘detonating’ the crass existing material world so that it could be reorganized beautifully at an artist’s will or ultimately by reducing preexisting culture to ‘ground zero’” (p.44). From the status of messiah the futurists later reduced the status of the artist to that of “a mere artisan-craftsman,” (“like ‘a shoemaker, a woodworker, a tailor’”) and to a prophetic function that consisted solely of “leading the new man toward the communist faith.” Nonetheless, this resultant type of artist still “created value autonomously” (pp.53-54).

Not exactly the same can be said about the Left Front theorists (and particularly the production art movement of Arvatov), who, “in an attempt to put the theory on an explicitly Marxist platform, embraced the notion of art as production and of the artist as engineer” (pp.54-55): “‘next to the man of science, the art worker must become a psychoengineer, a psychoconstructor,’ who shapes and organizes the psyche and the will of the working masses.” Based on this, Gutkin (pp.52, 57) claims that the “socialist realist definition of the artist” did nothing more than to endorse “the avant-garde’s ideas of aesthetic engineering and art as production” by capitalizing on the avant-garde’s search for “the artist’s cultural role” throughout the revolutionary period. “The purpose of the First Writers’ Congress and the socialist realist aesthetic,” she thus concludes (idem), “was to finalize the definition of the artist’s relationship to the general project:

Writers became engineers of human souls in the sense that they created models of the new men for imitation by the masses.”

It is essential to note here that unlike Groys (1988), Gutkin does not interpret socialist realism mainly as the submission of the avant-garde to a political force capable to implement its aesthetical-political project (Stalin). Instead, her aim is to show the emergence of socialist realism at the meeting point between the utopian schemes of the aesthetic and the political avant-gardes by emphasizing the connections between them and between certain of their strands. Nowhere is this clearer than in the discussions of ‘ultrarealism’ and of ‘the struggle with byt.’

“Ultrarealism” is the name given by Left Front theorist Nikolai Chuzhak to the artistic method resulting from his attempt to interpret the “dialectic principle” of Marx via Solov’ev’s “theurgical aesthetics” (p.46). Chuzhak thought that, if divested of its religious imagery, Solovev’s theurgic art, with its aim of providing an understanding of life in the present but also of making transparent “its future dialectic negation,” would provide a sure foundation for a Marxist aesthetics: “To expose the sprouts of the future, ripening in invisible reality, to expose new reality, hiding in the depths of contemporaneity, to cast off the dying, the temporarily domineering – such is the true goal of art, viewed from the dialectic point of view. ...To transform reality in its distant perspective, to perceive it in all its chaos, to illuminate it with the far-off light and to create future reality – such is the thorny, but joyful, path of the genius” (Chuzhak 1921, cited in Gutkin 1999, p.46). Starting from an aesthetical principle of Solov’ev (“that art must represent ‘any object or phenomenon from the point of view of its ultimate state or in the light of the future world’”) also reflected in the slogan of the symbolists and

futurists (“To bring art into life until art is fully dissolved in it”), and receiving the backing of Left Front theorist Sergei Tret’iakov (“the revolutionary artist must depict ‘a dialectically perceived reality which is in the state of perpetual formation’”), this ultrarealism or “life-building” aesthetics of Chuzhak was finally adopted, at the First Writers’ Congress of 1934, as part of the unifying aesthetic doctrine of socialist realism (pp.46-49). This, at least, is the claim that Gutkin puts forward. She also notes that since the contribution was unacknowledged by the ‘creators of socialist realism,’ such as Gorki (so as to ensure the adoption of the doctrine by different competing groups), this link between the avant-garde and socialist realism is only discernible to those “following closely the evolution of Russian symbolism” (pp.49-50).

During the revolutionary period, the issue of transfiguring life or of “life-building” is inextricably linked with the notion of ‘byt.’ As a term, ‘byt’ refers both to notion of “everyday life” and to that of “lifestyle” (p.81). Gutkin (idem) defines it as “a combination of customs and mores manifest in the forms of everyday life characteristic of a given social milieu,” and she is keen to emphasize the “material aspect” of this meaning. As “heirs to Russian ‘romantic anticapitalism,’” the theme of “the struggle with byt” is from the very beginning present in both the political and the aesthetic avant-garde: “Whatever the differences may have been between Merezhkovskii, Belyi, Gorkii, and Lenin, in their criticism of ‘petty bourgeois philistines,’ they stood on common ground. All reviled the middle class for the meanness of its ideals, which were materialist in nature and firmly rooted in a complacent acceptance of existing reality –in short, for not striving toward an ideal future for all, and for an unwillingness to sacrifice for the sake of the ‘higher spiritual’ or radical revolutionary aspirations” (pp.13-14).

“The struggle with byt,” it can thus be seen, stems from “the animus toward bourgeois forms of life” and is manifested as a concern with all “forms of ordinary daily existence” (p.15). The issue, and one generally shared, is not only the dismantling of the old ‘byt’ but the construction of a new one. The doctrine of socialist realism, Gutkin (p.92) claims, was formed at the junction between three different conceptions of “the struggle with byt:” of the political avant-garde, of the aesthetic avant-garde, and of the proletariat-oriented Association for the Study of the Contemporary Revolutionary Everyday (AKhRR). For the political leadership the issue of ‘byt’ referred, unsurprisingly, to matters of public conduct such as “mass drunkennes, foul language and spitting in public, a poor work ethic, sexual promiscuity” and so on. Opposed to the futurist ideal of the “total remaking of the everyday,” the AKhRR aesthetic focused, instead, on “depicting the everyday ‘as it is:’” “the aim must be to ‘reflect with documentary accuracy in genre, portrait and landscape, the life of contemporary Russia, and to depict the whole working life in its multi-faceted character” (p.92). As for the artistic avant-garde, although symbolists, futurists and the Left Front engaged with the issue of “byt” differently what can be discerned is a common underlining paradigm or aesthetical system. The symbolists saw ‘the struggle with byt’ in spiritual terms, as a struggle to escape the inertia of matter in order to attain to a higher reality and a higher level of creativity (p.85). This implied a very personal struggle with the mores of the previous generation. The symbolists took it on themselves, therefore, to replace “traditional family ties by a circle of like-minded friends, as well as [by] experimentations with erotic partnership” and to challenge other established norms of society, in the quest to formulate a “new culture of the future” through their own lives (pp.84-85). In particular, lifestyle in the apartment “was identified as the solid protective core of the stagnant,

stuffy ‘bourgeois’ byt” because it attracted a “corresponding worldview” (p.86). For the futurists, ‘the struggle with byt’ took on more radical forms, in both their lifestyle and their artistic work, which in fact, were seen as one: “The futurists’ every action – their manner of dressing (for example, Maiakovskii’s ‘yellow jacket’) and of public conduct (the repeated appearances in public with painted faces, which they explained as a way ‘for art to invade life’ in order to present ‘a new way of propagation’ of ‘the new life’), the language of the manifestos, and the very look of their publications (printed on the crudest paper, some of the covers fashioned out of coarse burlap) – all were calculated, as was emphasized by the title of Russian futurism’s most famous manifesto, to have the effect of ‘a slap in the face of public taste,’ or of a terrorist bomb exploded in the midst of daily life governed by bourgeois propriety” (p.87). The futurists were thus ready to continue the civil war or the anti-bourgeois revolution by aesthetic means, making “the conquest of the everyday” their highest mission (p.89): “[Take aim] at byt! Fire at byt! Right through the brain of man! Right through the heart of the woman!” (Maiakovskii 1939-1949, cited in Gutkin 1999, p.94). While this did not result in aesthetic strategies for the construction of the new byt, this task was taken over by the Left Front, who argued “that art must join industrial culture in order to produce ideal forms of material objects for the everyday – clothes, furniture, architecture.” The Left Front suggestions for a new byt resulted both in utopian schemes such as Klebnikov’s vision of a future apartment as consisting “of a mobile glass cabin that could be easily loaded on a train, so that each citizen could have a place to live in any city” (p.91) and in “the forerunners of contemporary armchair beds and sleeper sofas” (p.95). Even so, with the apartment still constituting the central target for the struggle against the byt of bourgeois taste, the suggestions of the Left Front theorists focused more on its “annihilation” rather than its

reconstruction as an ideal living space: “a modern individual needed no more than an empty room, a mattress, a folding chair, a table, and a gramophone” (p.95). In practical terms, therefore, ‘the struggle with byt’ reflected a concern with the renunciation of material desires, and in fact, with a form of self-sacrifice that could usher in a new reality.

On this theme, Gutkin offers three more essential observations. Firstly, although not explicitly mentioned, one can see that Gutkin (p.84) describes the overall paradigm of the aesthetic avant-garde as equally relying on both the concept of ‘life-building,’ or ‘ultrarealism,’ and on the notion of ‘the struggle with byt’: “in the aesthetic ideology of the artistic avant-garde, from symbolists, to pre- and postrevolutionary futurists, to production artists and constructivists, the struggle with byt – that is with the old byt and for the new, ideal byt – became the rhetorical embodiment of the avant-garde ‘s aesthetic and ethical stance: (1) the negation of existing ‘stable forms and norms’ of daily life as bourgeois, or crassly materialist and outmoded, and the urge to annihilate them; (2) the view that the revolution was to constitute a spiritual conquest over the inert, ‘stagnant’ physical matter of life; (3) a vociferous antirealist attitude, and the imperative that ‘true art’ must not imitate life but rather shape it by the force of creative spirit; and (4) the endeavor to anticipate the envisioned future synthesis of art and life.” It is obvious that in the scheme presented above, and which summarizes the aesthetical theory of the Russian avant-garde, the first two points relate to the notion of ‘the struggle against byt,’ and the last two to the concept of ‘life-building’ or ‘ultrarealism.’ This, therefore, emerges as the scheme, in my view, through which Gutkin defines the aesthetical system

of the Russian artistic avant-garde, and through which she sees it continued or incorporated into the doctrine of socialist realism.

Secondly, based on the above definition of socialist realism, Gutkin (p.73) rejects Evgenii Dobrenko's emphasis on the role of the Russian readership in defining "the character of the socialist realist novel": "Although intended as a synthetic genre that would overcome the split between elite and mass culture, the socialist realist novel was a product of the visionary, theoretical discourse of the cultural elite."

Thirdly, Gutkin (p.100) observes that while the avant-garde's 'struggle with byt' is soon defeated (early 1930s) at the political and social level by the inertia of the bourgeois-like materialist culture present in the elites and the masses, the notion continues to operate, albeit only at a symbolical level, in socialist realist literature⁴³: "It was rather on a mythic level, manifest in socialist realist art, that the Soviet elite – the Party leaders and artists – continued to bear the burden of the 'advancement toward the commune' by having to provide the masses with models of advanced communist consciousness – the advancement was measured principally in the correct attitude to everyday life."

The question that must be posed now is how the description that Gutkin provides in relation to socialist realism relates to the mirror-mechanism. At a general level, the answer is quite clear. Both the political and the artistic avant-gardes shared, as part of their common 'intellectual revolutionary paradigm,' "the goal of creating an ideal society of supermen in the immediate future" (p.12). By conceptualizing the artist as an 'engineer of the human soul,' both avant-gardes specified a clear role for the socialist

⁴³ "Overall, in socialist realist fiction, Gutkin (1999, p.104) therefore argues with fitting examples, 'a character's attitude toward the everyday, toward domestic comfort, was destiny.'"

artist: the creation of “models of the new men for imitation by the masses” (p.57). In other words, the role of the socialist artist was to produce countless models of new or ideal humanity, an impressive list of which is carefully provided by Gutkin (1999), but which will not be analyzed here inasmuch as such issues have already been discussed in relation to Clark (1981). It would suffice to add here that, generally, these models correspond well to the two axes of the mirror-mechanism. Less obvious, but of more interest are the two main constituents of the scheme through which Gutkin defines both the aesthetical theory of the artistic avant-garde and the doctrine of socialist realism, that is, ‘life-building’ and ‘the struggle with byt.’ Particularly in the manner of their description by Gutkin as an integral scheme (p.84) it can be easily be discerned that a) ‘the struggle with byt’ constitutes an essential prerequisite for engaging with ‘life-building’ and refers to a sort of asceticism, renunciation of (material) desire and even self-sacrifice, while b) ‘life-building’ refers to a process in which the individual begins to partake of his ideal state, or of a higher reality, and begins to mirror the creative force of that spirit by constructing inner and outer reality (all forms of life) in its image.

It is clear from this that while the notion of ‘the struggle with byt’ corresponds to the first axis of the mirror-mechanism (‘the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself’) or to the theological notion of kenosis, the principle of ‘life-building’ reflects very well the second axis (‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good’) or the notion of ‘imitatio Dei.’ This should not come as surprise as both elements, ‘the struggle with byt’ and ‘life-building,’ appear in integrated form in Solov’ev’s theurgic vision of the transfiguration of matter by the spirit. This last connection is clearly emphasized in Gutkin’s work. A

certain final conclusion, therefore, imposes itself here: through her analysis of socialist realism in terms of these two concepts of the avant-garde, Gutkin posits (possibly involuntarily) the theological thought of Solov'ev as central to both the aesthetical system of the avant-garde and the doctrine of socialist realism. If this is true, the inquiry into the origin of socialist realism must enter the domain of theology and religion.

The Mirror-Mechanism and Religion

Before directing myself to the topic at hand, I must admit that this chapter has been the farthest and also the one unexpected milestone reached on a research trajectory (with limited time) that started from Foucault, and then navigated through Romanian and Russian Communism as civilization and culture. It might still be that a better explanation could be put forward on mythological or some other kind of grounds. However, the issue cannot be ignored. Some similarity between the hero-mirror mechanism and religious aspects was always easy to spot, but this was not of concern to me for most of the project. Thus, my research that started with a humanistic device derived out of Cernat et al. (2004) and which seemed to revolve around the issue of ethics, gradually became a formation somehow paralleling Foucault's notion of the Christian apparatus of pastoral power on the one hand, and on the other, an archetypal-metaphysical structure that seemed to belong somewhere between religion and philosophy. In this, the specific turn to investigating religion has been caused by the confirmation of Foucault's thoughts on the pastorate in Kotkin (1997) and Hellbeck (2006) and by the emphasis Clark (1981), Groys (1992) and especially Gutkin (1999)

place on the influence of Solov'ev on socialist realism. From Solov'ev, the domain of Christian theology and of religious literature in general was just a step away. In particular, Solov'ev and his magnificent attempt to formulate a unified philosophy/theology based on the notion of Christology was important in highlighting to me that the notion of the mirror-mechanism should be viewed, at a maximal level, as an ontological, epistemological and anthropological scheme (or otherwise put, as both the problematic of 'imago Dei' and of Christology). An example of how this problematic was reflected in Solov'ev's thought can be found in the remarkable work of Oliver Smith (2011):

“The early Soloviev engages this task on several fronts. On the ontological plane, he attempts to resolve the question of what matter actually is, its nature and laws, and what there might be besides it. On the metaphysical plane, he argues for the absolute principle's reliance on matter for its own realization, or concrete manifestation. In his anthropology, he sketches a portrait of the human being as the mediator between the spiritual and material realms, and of Christ the God-man as the bringer to perfection of such mediation in his Incarnation and Resurrection. In all these spheres, the common feature is Soloviev's attempt to discover the locus of mediation between spirit and matter, and from there to work out its precise character and meaning for the created world.”

In theological Christian terms then, my conclusions are that the foundation of the mirror-mechanism lies with the concept of “Imago Dei,” while its axis of sacrifice resembles that of “kenosis,” and its axis of purity of heart and mirroring of the Divine resembles that of “imitatio Dei.” I will try to describe this in the briefest way possible. The concept

of “Imago Dei”⁴⁴ establishes the likeness of man with God, i.e., that man is made in God’s image. However, this concept is significantly more complex because it presupposes an intermediary agent that mediates this relationship of mirroring.⁴⁵ This agent can be referred to spiritually as the emanation of God responsible for creation (Logos⁴⁶, Holy Spirit⁴⁷, Universal Intellect⁴⁸, Word of God, Sophia⁴⁹, the Dharmakāya⁵⁰

⁴⁴ There are significant differences between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions and between them and their various mystical branches on how to answer the issue of man having been created in the ‘image of God.’ A brilliant exposition of the notion for Islam is provided in Michot (2006) who looks at various contrasting approaches to notions such as “form,” “image,” “similarity,” “signs,” “covenant” and how they cover the similar problematic given by the notion of imago Dei. Alternatively, Salvesen (2009, pp.160-161) provides an introduction into the Christian perspective: “A few interpreters wearied of attempts to define or locate the image of God ... As for those who did attempt to find in what way humans resemble God, we can summarize their respective positions roughly as follows: 1. **An inner quality such as the soul or mind: the Trinitarian reflection falls within this category.** 2. An outward form, usually the posture. 3. **An exalted position on earth analogous to that of God in heaven.** 4. **The dominant view, however, is that Christ alone is the true image, and that only through him can human come to resemble the divine**” [my emphasis]. In my opinion, however, this interpretation is partially misleading, because of leaving the Word of God, Logos or Holy Spirit, and also the creation of Nature, which can also be considered reflective of God’s image, out of the picture, or rather as hidden in the problematic of Christology. Essentially then, in this thesis, the concept of ‘imago Dei’ is implied as a spread out ontological scheme that relates elements such as of God – Human-Divine/Spiritual Entity – Man – Nature (Animal/Vegetal/Mineral), scheme characteristic of Lovejoy’s (2001) “Great Chain of Being” or Solov’ev’s theology (Smith 2011).

⁴⁵ One of the clearest uses of this metaphor I could find appears in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1908, p.207): “And know that the proceeding of the Word and the Holy Spirit from God, which is the proceeding and appearance of manifestation, must not be understood to mean that the Reality of Divinity had been divided into parts, or multiplied, or that it had descended from the exaltation of holiness and purity. God forbid! If a pure, fine mirror faces the sun, the light and heat, the form and the image of the sun will be resplendent in it with such manifestation that if a beholder says of the sun, which is brilliant and visible in the mirror, “This is the sun,” it is true. Nevertheless, the mirror is the mirror, and the sun is the sun. The One Sun, even if it appears in numerous mirrors, is one. This state is neither abiding nor entering, neither commingling nor descending; for entering, abiding, descending, issuing forth and commingling are the necessities and characteristics of bodies, not of spirits; then how much less do they belong to the sanctified and pure Reality of God.”

⁴⁶ “In an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 2.1-3.19, he [Philo of Alexandria] argued that God first made God’s image, the Logos, and then created humanity ‘after the image,’ i.e. resembling the Logos rather than God’s own self. The resemblance in each case is at the level of mind, nous, which in the Deity governs the universe and in human controls the rest of the body” (Salvesen 2009, p.157).

⁴⁷ “Various notions were been propounded in history to explain the work, role and person of the Holy Spirit. ... The overwhelming amount of books and articles produced as popular and theological reading material on the Holy Spirit attests to a moving away from the strong Christcentric views of people like Karl Barth who reduced and concentrated nearly every act and work of God’s involvement with human beings and with the natural cosmic world in God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. The increasing fashionable tendency of late 20th century Christianity of emphasising the Holy Spirit in theological and ecclesial reflection as the initiating actor of the avenues of access to God is in a sense new but also a recurrence of what happened in various periods in the history of Christendom. **In several historical contexts when people were concentrating in their discourses on the relationship of God and Jesus Christ, the Holy**

etc.) and historically, or in human terms, as the perfect or super-human beings represented by the prophet-messengers of God, the “Seal of Prophets”⁵¹ or the “Son of God,”⁵² or the “Manifestation of God,”⁵³ or the “Twelfth Imam,”⁵⁴ or the Sufi “Perfect

Spirit has been viewed as the indispensable unifying and binding element between them (Berkhof 1986:329-334)” (Nigrini 2006, pp.123-124) [my emphasis].

⁴⁸ A key term in the philosophy of Plotinus: “Plotinus taught God's unknowability, the emanation doctrine of creation, and the co-eternity of the universe with God. He also asserted the existence of a Universal Intellect as a metaphysical principle between God and the physical universe” (Cole, 1982 ¶ 2).

⁴⁹ “For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; / because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. / For she is a breath of the power of God, / and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty... / For she is a reflection of eternal light, / **a spotless mirror** of the working of God, and **an image of [God's] goodness.**” Wisd. 7:24-26, 29b-30 (McFarland 2005, p.23)

⁵⁰ “Tibetans believe that the Buddha, as a realized being, manifests himself on many different levels. Following Indian tradition, they divide these levels into three primary “bodies.” First is the *nirmanakaya*, emanation body, the Buddha's physical, human form in which-as described in his early biographies-he appears as a prince, renounces the world, and follows the path to enlightenment. Second, the Buddha appears as the *sambhogakaya*, body of enjoyment, his brilliant, transfigured, nonphysical form of light. In this body he journeys to the heavens, teaches the gods, and reveals himself to highly attained people. Finally there is the Buddha's *dharmakaya*, the body of reality itself, without specific, delimited form, wherein the Buddha is identified with the spiritually charged nature of everything that is” (Ray 2001, p.13).

⁵¹ Key term through which Prophet Muhammad is referred to in the Qur'an.

⁵² “And all of us, with unveiled faces, **seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.**” 2 Corinthians 3.18 / “...**Christ, who is the image of God.**” 2 Corinthians 4.4 / [**Christ] is the reflection of God's glory** and the exact imprint of God's very being” Hebrews 1.3. (Salvesen, p.158).

⁵³ An excellent source on the topic is Cole (1982, ¶ 3) and this is his introductory definition: “The Bahá'í concept of the intermediary between God and humankind expresses itself paradigmatically in the term “manifestation of God” or “theophany” (*mazhar ilahi, zuhur*). This idea emphasizes simultaneously the humanity of that intermediary and the way in which he shows forth the names and attributes of God. According to the Bahá'í writings, the manifestation of God is not an incarnation of God, as the transcendent Godhead can never incarnate itself in a mere mortal frame. But neither is the manifestation of God an ordinary, sinful mortal. **He acts as a pure mirror to reflect the attributes of the Deity into this temporal plane.** The term “manifestation of God” is not the only name the Bahá'í scriptures apply to this figure. They refer to him as prophet-messenger, prophet endowed with constancy, Primal Will, Word of God, Universal Intellect, and Primal Point. It should be clear that the concept of the manifestation of God in Bahá'í thought involved many elements. In some ways, the Bahá'í writings affirm the validity of terms and ideas which appear in past scriptures, theologies and philosophical systems. Much terminology, for instance, derives from the Qur'an (which Bahá'ís regard as authentic revealed scripture) and ultimately reflects the Judaic religious heritage. For example, in the Bahá'í writings the Jewish insistence on the oneness and transcendence of God are consistently present. One also finds terminology similar to that of John's Gospel, especially to those passages where John explicates the Logos concept. But in the Bahá'í writings, these past terms are integrated into a new vision, and sometimes endowed with new significance. Although perhaps none of the terms and concepts which Bahá'í scripture employs to describe God's envoy to humankind appear there for the first time, including that of the manifestation of God (an epithet used by Shi'í thinkers), the Bahá'í scripture's use of these terms and concepts creates a new theology. It differs from the conventional Imami Shi'ite prophetology in some respects, and often has more in common with the prophetology of the Muslim philosophers” [my emphasis].

⁵⁴ The complex Shi'a doctrine which posits limited contact with a Saviour both in and out of history at the same time (hence, also named the “Hidden Imam”) until the moment of his full return.

Man”⁵⁵ etc. It becomes obvious at this point that this intermediate notion is associated with entire fields or even schools of religious thought. In its spiritual aspect, the concept relates to the domain of Pneumatology⁵⁶, to the mystical theology of Plotinus, to Sophiology⁵⁷ (which can, however, lead to Mariology⁵⁸) to Taoism⁵⁹, and so on. In its human aspect, it relates to the general problematic of ”prophetology”⁶⁰ which then branches out in specific fields such as that of “Christology.”⁶¹ What is essential here is that the manner in which these theological issues are grappled with determines the ontological and epistemological status of human beings. In other words, the notion of

⁵⁵ The Sufi notion of the “Perfect Man” goes as far as to claim that the mystic can become one with Reality or the essence of Being.

⁵⁶ The branch of religious thought that deals with the notion of the Holy Spirit, usually as a matter of doctrine.

⁵⁷ “if Sophia, as the Wisdom of the Word, as Logos, is the self-revelation of God in the Second Hypostasis, then the Glory is the Self-revelation of God in the Third Hypostasis. In other words, *Sophia as the Glory belongs to the Holy Spirit*” (Bulgakov 1945, cited in Sergeev 2000, p.6). “The world and the centre of the world –man, is the creation of God through Wisdom [Sophia], through Divine Ideas, and at the same time it is the child of meonic uncreated freedom, the child of fathomless non-being.” “Personality is the image and likeness of God in man and this is why it rises above the natural life” (Berdyayev 1959, pp.29-55). It should be mentioned here that Berdyayev differs from Bulgakov, in that he subordinates Sophia to Logos as Christ: “At the centre always there ought to remain the God-Man Christ, as the principle of sacred anthropology. The principle however of a sacred cosmologism, of a sophianic femininity, which can only be virginity, is a principle subordinate to the Logos” (Berdyayev 1929, p.97).

⁵⁸ “The sophiological theological efforts of Fr. S. Bulgakov signify a return to the sacred, the Divine cosmos, the restoration of the organic-mystical connection between God and the creaturely world. In both the world and in mankind there is reflected and acts the Most Holy Trinity and it is foremost through the Wisdom of God. **The summit of the sophianic aspect, of creation's wisdom, is manifest in the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. Without the sophianic aspect of the creature, without the manifestation of the wise, the virginal femininity, there would be impossible the Incarnation of God and God-Manhood.** Sophiology carries over into Mariology” (Berdyayev 1929, p.95).

⁵⁹ “There was something vague between heaven and earth arose. How calm! How void! It stands alone, unchanging; it acts everywhere, untiring. It may be considered the mother of everything under heaven. I do not know its name, but call it by the word Tao” (Lao-tzu, cited in Watts 1958, p.16). Like in other Eastern religions, the notion of kenosis [“Bone like dry bone/Mind like dead ashes/This is true knowledge” Chuang-tzu, cited in Watts, p.24)] seems to overwhelm the notion of imitation Dei in Tao, but the final results are the same. By training one’s mind to achieve a state of “no mind” (“wu-hsin”) which Watts (pp.24-25) describes as “un-self-consciousness” the Tao follower “begins to show the special kind of ‘virtue’ or ‘power’ called te,” which is the form of participation in Tao.

⁶⁰ Bodies or traditions of religious thought, usually of Jewish or Muslim extraction, which discuss the ontological status of prophets as a specific theme (Cole 1982).

⁶¹ “[I]t is impossible to dissect the objective Christ into a form, whose sole property is to ‘appear’ externally, and a formless light which is what remains for the religious interiority. The whole mystery of Christianity, that which distinguishes it radically from every other religious project, is that the form does not stand in opposition to infinite light, for the reason that God has himself instituted and confirmed such a form” (Hans Urs von Balthasar 1982, cited in McFarland 2005, p.51).

“imago Dei” hides within it the central notion of the Divine-human agent, which is essential in the definition of the human being (anthropology). When narrowly expanded then, the notion of “imago Dei” provides an ontological, epistemological and anthropological model of God, Divine-human agent and human being. If the Divine-human agent is the mediator in this scheme, the question of what the process of mediation signifies or requires from human beings becomes crucial. It is here that the metaphor of the mirror (already contained in the notion of Imago Dei) and the notion of the two axes come into the picture. In short, one finds that the divine reality of this mediating process is generally alluded to through symbolic analogies and that one of the key examples used is that of the mirror-metaphor. This involves an analogy between the Sun of Reality as God, the Divine Mirror as the Divine-human agent, and the mirror of man as the human heart. For the light of God to reach the mirror of man, the simile goes, the mirror must 1) be cleaned or purified and 2) must be turned towards God. In the first case, the analogy points to the process of emptying or purifying the heart, of renouncing the self, all human knowledge and worldly attachments. This is the starting point for engaging with divine reality or the mediating process. Without it the human heart cannot sense or reflect the divine light:

“Knowest thou why thy mirror reflects not?

Because the rust has not been scoured from its face

If it were purified from all rust and defilement,

It would reflect the shining of the SUN of GOD” (Rumi 2001, p.6).

In the second case, the analogy states that it is not enough or even possible to achieve a pure mirror of the heart in the absence of another process. This mirror must be turned towards God, in this case the Divine-human agent. It must seek to reflect divine qualities. It is to turn to the knowledge of God, to the love of God, to recognition of God, to the laws and ordinance of God. In a sense, as Foucault (1993, p.211) observes for Christianity, these processes imply each-other: “A Christian is always supposed to be supported by the light of faith if he wants to explore himself, and conversely, access to the truth of the faith cannot be conceived of without the purification of the soul.” The heart cannot reflect God if it has not been purified, but purification cannot take place without the heart turning unto God. One cannot move closer to God without moving away from one’s self and one cannot move away from one’s self without attempting to be nearer to God. In some cases, the analogy is continued with the assertion that it is the fire of the love of God that cleans the heart:

“Only he whose garment is rent by the violence of love

Is wholly pure from covetousness and sin” (Rumi 2001, p.5).

The analogy is therefore, somewhat paradoxical. In a sense, one aspect must occur before the other, in the other, both are simultaneous. These are the symbolical limits of the analogy or simile, which interpretation must transcend, but this is another matter.

It can be noticed now that the first aspect of the analogy corresponds to the axis of sacrifice in the mirror-mechanism (‘the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything

for something greater than himself’) and, in Christian terms, to the notion of “kenosis”⁶². Similarly, the second aspect corresponds to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism (‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good’) and to the notion of ‘imitatio Dei,’ with its specific forms such as ‘imitatio Christi’⁶³ or ‘imitatio Muhammadi’⁶⁴. As alluded before, ‘imitatio Dei’ can refer both to certain

⁶² To start with, I prefer this succinct definition from Wikipedia, because it offers a neutral and general perspective which emphasizes the meaning of the term both as a concept and as a form of practice: “In Christian theology, *kenosis* (from the Greek word for *emptiness* κένωσις, *kénōsis*) is the 'self-emptying' of one's own will and becoming entirely receptive to God's divine will” (Wikipedia, ‘Kenosis’).” In Christian tradition, the notion has been discussed particularly in relation to a paragraph in Philippians 2:5-8: “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (McClain 1993, pp.88-89). In terms of a conceptual definition I find that McClain (p.93) offers a good account of the standard Christian view: “**We may say, then, that the eternal Son, existing in the form of God - robbed with the glory of Deity in its external manifestation, possessing and exercising all the incommunicable functions of the true God - counted not this being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but with loving condescension emptied Himself, taking servant-form; and as a result of this one act His whole earthly life became the life of a bond-servant, in which he does nothing, speaks nothing, knows nothing by Himself: but all is under the power and direction of the Father through the Holy Spirit. In this sense, during His earthly sojourn, the ‘external glory’ was utterly laid aside. ‘He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.’ But there was another, an inner glory: and this glory, of which the external glory had been indicative, was still present, though veiled by the servant-form. He did not - it is not too much to say that He could not - empty Himself of this. And to those who came to know Him because their eyes were enlightened by the Spirit, His blessed inner glory became apparent in spite of the veil of flesh, so that they could witness that, ‘the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth’**” [my emphasis]. More than just a theological notion, however, ‘kenosis’ has historically been an issue of both dogma and religious practice, and one which has separated Eastern and Western Christianity. An example of this more complicated dimension of the term is given by Nigrini (2006, pp.171-172): “The history of the idea of kenosis embedded in various Christologies expressed various theological notions. Some are embedded in a broader history of Christian doctrine and theology; others are not. Some deal with the more technical aspects of Christological dogma, doctrine and theology, while others deal more with the changing images of Christ which Christians and perhaps others have held through the centuries (Pelikan 1985:xv, 5).”

⁶³ “‘He who follows Me, walks not in darkness,’ says the Lord. By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.... Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ” (Kempis 1441, Book 1: Chapter I).

⁶⁴ “When the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is considered the Perfect Man (al-Insān al-Kāmil), it is from this point of view. It is not because he substantially possessed any supernatural or divine law but because he became, in his everyday life and in his prophetic leadership of his community, a kind of living Qur’an, offering a perfect realization and implementation of the Qur’anic ethics. He was divinely elected (mustafā) to such an honour, and nobody can expect or claim to share it with him. Every Muslim is, however invited to follow him in his humble and loving worship of the Lord God, Islam being essentially an **imitatio Muhammadi** (peace be upon him), between the unacceptable extremes of a-scriptural naturalism and innovation” (Michot 2006, pp.173-174).

qualities that should be reflected, to the pattern of life of a sacred figure, or to the laws and ordinances laid down by such a figure. Overall, the two axes can intersect, as in the notion of the mortification of self resulting into martyrdom or sacrifice as ‘imitatio Christi.’ As discussed, both aspects imply the idea of purity of heart. In a sense, one notion involves the purification of the heart through detachment from one’s self, while the other, purification of the heart through reflection of God⁶⁵. Nonetheless there is also a noteworthy difference in perspective. While the first aspect is described as the mirror being purified from all the ‘rust and defilement’ of self, or as the heart emptying itself from attachments to self, the second aspect presupposes that a certain state of cleanliness of the mirror of the heart has already been achieved, and that the heart has started to reflect divine qualities, or to be filled with states of the spirit⁶⁶. For this reason, although alluding to the purification process described in the first axis (and as ‘kenosis’), the title of the second axis as ‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good’ fits very well with the second aspect of the mirror analogy (and with that of ‘imitatio Dei’).

As hinted at before here and more specifically discussed in relation to Foucault in the Methodology chapter, the mirror-mechanism is an allegorical structure, but also, a highly symbolic matrix out of which ontological, epistemological⁶⁷ and

⁶⁵ “O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting” (*Bahá'u'lláh* 1986, p.9).

⁶⁶ This dynamic is well captured by Thomas à Kempis in his “Imitation of Christ” (Book 2: Chapter 1, ‘Meditation’): “The kingdom of God is within you,” says the Lord. Turn, then, to God with all your heart. Forsake this wretched world and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the kingdom of God come unto you, that kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, gifts not given to the impious. Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a fit dwelling for Him in your heart, whose beauty and glory, wherein He takes delight, are all from within.”

⁶⁷ Saiedi (2000, pp.137-154) views these two axes, or what I have called the “mirror-mechanism” as an issue of epistemology relating to divine revelation, and so as a hermeneutical principle.

anthropological⁶⁸ frameworks can emerge (including Foucauldian apparatuses such as that of the Christian pastorate). Probably, in its most complex form, this matrix is identical with the description of the nature of the Divine-human agent. The simple point that I am making is that the mirror-mechanism represents a symbolic master-structure, but one which specifies criteria and even clear guidelines about the ontological reality and epistemological possibilities of human existence. However, the language is allegorical and the possibilities of interpretation, if only we judge historically, are countless. Nonetheless, the two aspects of the mirror-metaphor specify the directions of human action in a way that is almost practical to follow. What I mean by that is that, if pursued, the next level of interpretation would most likely result not only in the establishment of a well-defined ontological or epistemological framework of a religious or philosophical kind, but, most importantly, in concrete human practices. To give more definite structure to this allegory is to formulate an entire body of Christian or Islamic doctrine, of Jewish jurisprudence or Sufi mysticism (the same applies to Eastern religions if considering the nature of the Divine-human agent as the first emanation from God, or as his energy of illumination), and what is more importantly here, of religious and, thus, of cultural and social practice. The mirror mechanism, I argue therefore, is a symbolic matrix or structure that conceptually prefigures, but from only one-step away, any institutionalized religious discourse or practice. In this sense, the mirror-mechanism prefigures, but from only one-step away, the Christian apparatus of pastoral power and its technologies of self. The relationship between them is as close as that found between the axis of 'kenosis' and the two practices of "exomologesis" (Foucault 1988, V, para. 7-

⁶⁸ See for example Berdyaev (1959) who explicitly constructs human "personality" as derived from "the God-Man Christ, as the principle of sacred anthropology" (Berdiaev 1929, p.97).

9) and “exagoreusis” (idem, VI, para. 3) (see the Methodology chapter). Kenosis is the general principle, while exomologesis and exagoreusis are two specific historical interpretations given to it at the level of institutional practice. On the other hand, the notion of ‘Pastorship’ (Foucault 1988, pp.203-207) is just another modality of interpreting the more general concept of ‘imago Dei.’

To conclude with, these are some of the ‘scriptural’ reasons for which I have argued the mirror-mechanism originates with religion, that is, that the mechanism is of a religious kind. Inasmuch as religion equally implies both the orders of culture and politics, this mechanism can be seen to function both as a cultural mechanism and as a governance mechanism. Of course, within any religion, the idea is that God or the Divine Mirror itself would control the mechanism most often through an administrative structure of some kind. The distinction between a system administered by God and one administered by man is impossible to make in real life. But things are differently at the level of ideology. What happens when such a structure is operated from a non-transcendental, maybe more extreme humanistic dimension? Could someone assume the position of Logos and start dictating the definition of our human reality based on certain demiurgic/transcendental claims? What is there to learn from Communism about the role of religion and the other way around? Equally, should we view any state-religion or any type of religious movement as justified in employing such a mechanism? Otherwise put, what are the limits of use for such a mechanism in terms of governance and political systems, or in the sphere of culture? Is there a special use-value to it? Moreover, are such mechanisms becoming extinct in capitalism, or on the contrary, have they been transformed and are now multiplying? This is how the mirror-mechanism would appear

as a problematic of history from the perspective of religion. Or, in other words, this is the horizon of a problematic to which an analysis of Communist culture inspired by Foucault has unexpectedly led. But this does not constitute the focus of this thesis, which operates largely with the notion of mirror-mechanism as a sort of humanistic device operating in the realm of culture. For this reason, and in its relation to Communism, the device has been designated and conceptualized as a ‘hero-mirror mechanism,’ with its own logic and larger forms of discourse corresponding to different historical periods.

The Logic behind the Mirror-Mechanism

Ultimately, in the Romanian context, the hero mirror-mechanism is a device that operates a communist-humanistic discourse which it adjusts in order to govern the possibilities of the mind to imagine reality. While the mission of the mirror mechanism is to create and regulate positive avatars (heroes imbued with the best of humanity) for every social category – its main function is not so much to maintain a certain discourse or ideology but rather to maintain control of all possible, alternative discourses, even to the extent of accepting, hybridizing with or even ‘growing’ certain new discourses – anything necessary to make sure the universe of the mind’s many independent trajectories is reconfigured for one exit only: the safeguarding of whatever aims the Party and its leadership might have at a specific moment. The discourses used can be Marxist, pastoral, nationalistic, imperialistic, universalistic and humanistic, ecological and even Orthodox-Christian or postmodern [that prominent members of the G80 and no

less literary critics combined such an outlook with a strong sense of ‘humanism’ only confirms this possibility (Șiulea 2003)], it makes no difference as long as they are reconfigured the proper way. This is so because the principle followed is one of saturation of the collective discursive space with avatars that bear, even if sometimes only remotely, the imprint of the party.

If in the first stage, this logic leads to the emptying of society of its substance, in the second, it results in it being filled with countless chains of hero-avatars which derive out of the higher, ubiquitous, absolute image of the Leader (or which are made to bear its imprint as a condition for their circulation), although sometimes the process can and does occur almost simultaneously, with more emphasis given to one or another aspect depending on the particular stage. In conclusion, the hero-mirror mechanism can thus also be described as that which regulates the process of the totalitarian emptying and filling of society in its simultaneity.

The Mirror-Mechanism: Forms of Discourse

Previously, the term “socialist realism” has been invoked to describe the first phase of the Communist transformation of society (inhale/destruction), while “socialist humanism” the second phase (exhale/creation). However, in this thesis, ‘socialist realism’ and ‘socialist humanism’ also feature as official discourses of the regime, being therefore conceptualized not only as phases but also, via examination, as discursive formations of the mirror-mechanism: “This literary current [socialist realism] is in fact an institution of the socialist party-state. It receives its name from it, it is not a current of

opinion, neither a literary one per se, but one of political expression of a single opinion that had become dogma” (Mitchievici 2005i, p.176).

This is a very loose categorization and a confusing use of concepts, but it serves the timing of the appearance of these official discourses (1945 and 1964 respectively), and the common division of Romanian Communist history according to two periods, one of direct oppression between 1945/49 and 1964, and the other, of regime consolidation between 1964 and 1989 (Negrici 2010, for example): “From structure to superstructure, just to remain faithful to the Marxist-Leninist algorithm, the transition is predictable: the popular revolution starts by modifying the political and economical world and ends by modeling, in a Promethean fashion, the conscience of millions of people” (Stanomir 2005i, p.262).

In this historical scheme, the term “socialist humanism” is preferred for the period 1964 to 1989 for several reasons. First among them is the impression that ‘humanism’ is essential to the discursive matrix of the mirror-mechanism. Secondly, because judging from the results of the present, unlike socialist realism and protochronism, socialist humanism does not seem to have diluted much, which could point to it being the most adaptive, most encompassing and most difficult to deconstruct out of the three. Thirdly, because the concept belongs to the official discourse of the regime itself and has been central at the level of policy since the introduction of the concept of “socialist nation” in 1968: “Socialist nationalism, though nobody in RCP branded it like this (it was just ‘the socialist nation’), became necessary in order to insure ‘maximum nourishment of the material and human potential’ that was crucial in the efficient (de)(em)ployment of the forces of production for the achievement of the nation-building process – the MDSS.

That is why, the developmental tasks, the process of modernization, was accompanied by ‘a project of Enlightenment,’ by a discourse of the new man and of the new type of human existence, of the communist conscience. ...The RCP project of Enlightenment was contained in its doctrine of socialist humanism...” (Gavrilă 2004, pp.49-50).

Fourthly, because since at least 1969, the concept has arguably become central to ethical, moral and educational discourse: “The established formula for describing the new ethics was that of ‘socialist humanism’, considered as revealing the lack of consistency of bourgeois pseudo-values and restoring forever the kingdom of ‘genuine values’: ‘ . . . individualism and selfishness are replaced by collectivism, the spirit of social responsibility, the noble relationship of friendship and comradeship, based on mutual help; instead of the cynicism and disdain for human being the esteem for human being; instead of preaching amoralism, the care for moral purity”” (Dumitrana 2001, p.12). Fifthly, support is also found in the fact that literary critic Eugen Negrici (2008, p.181) confirms the term of ‘humanism’ as “a formula” found “for succeeding the repudiated ‘socialist realism,’ for defining the culture of the Ceaușescu era, giving it a higher meaning.” Finally, because of frequent readings which in the subtext seem to indicate an aspect of socialist humanism. Thus, for example, while Goldiș (2011, pp.283-284) sees the field of literary criticism as dominated by a paradigm of “the autonomy of the aesthetical” which constantly puts off that of “socialist realism,” he nevertheless notes that this very paradigm “is illuminated internally by an existentialist philosophy, of ontological plenitude and of the idea that literature, at its highest levels, is life,” feature which renders it unable to proclaim the death of the author.

Social Realism as the first period/discourse of the mirror mechanism

My intention here is to show that, in fact, socialist realism and socialist humanism are not only variations of the same mechanism, or different moments of a similar logic, but also, expressions of the same nucleus or discursive matrix.

As discussed previously, socialist realism emerges as a rejection of aestheticism with its associated states of nostalgia and defeatism and its principle of ‘art for art’s sake,’ promoting instead a state of vitality and positivity compatible with “the élan of the ascending classes” (Mitchievici 2005i, p.172). How, then, is this realism different from the critical realism of the bourgeoisie? To start with, socialist realism chooses to distance itself from critical realism on the judgment that the capacity for critique existing within a bourgeois society could never overcome the constraints of that society’s own decadent condition. As an effect, therefore, socialist realism not only has the task of describing reality accurately, but also that of correcting the weaknesses identified: “Obviously, in such conditions, like Gorki shows, socialist realism will set itself apart from the critical one from the past. It becomes an affirmative, fortifying realism. In the past, to describe life realistically meant to unmask capitalism. In the socialist world, by describing realistically, truthful, without embellishments, writers confirm socialism. This is the truth. But, at the same time, they critique the deficiencies; try to help with their rectification. This is why the heroes, the exemplars of this current, are successful not only in the case of the negative characters, but also, at the opposite; in their

description, presentation, characterization and action, the positive heroes are also successful” (idem, p.177).

In short, this casting of socialist realism as a critique and correction of reality through the exemplars of the positive hero, from a position that confirms socialism, marks the inscription of socialist realism as a mirror-mechanism discourse functioning on the humanistic discursive matrix of the hero.

Initially, the use of positive models, even if at the level of fiction, is seen, by György Lukács for example, as accelerating the process of emancipation for the oppressed: “In this way, they [the characters] incorporate in their constitution the most diverse, the most hidden yearnings of the people, which are trying to make their way towards light and words; in this way, they not only express what today finds itself in a conscious mode at the surface of life, but they also penetrate into the true history of the birth of oppression, of degeneration, and also into the road for freedom, creating models which accelerate the process, in order for the nostalgia of liberation to become conscious and firm” (The Historical Novel, cited in idem, p.170).

This corrective dimension of socialist realism is nevertheless, explicitly associated with the controlled and planned implementation, at the level of the imaginary, of a humanistic utopia: “Literature, primarily, but also painting, cinematography or music participated in the scientific complex in equal measure through their object and function. The object: to reflect the world, in its essence and dynamic, not just according to appearances. The function: to teach common people to live like heroes from a novel. The new ‘realism’ means not only simple transposition, but also revelation and even transfiguration.

Working like a man of science, the writer explored present reality in order to find in it the embryos of a future world. Tried to discover, in the multitude of human exemplars, the new man in its becoming. Assumed the mission to make perceptible the genesis of tomorrow's world. In his discourse appeared a world truer than the authentic world, more in conformity with the profound tendencies of historical evolution. Perfect communism truly existed, of course, not in deeds, but with certainty in the libraries and the museums of the imaginary. Similarly to the project of the engineer, the literary model was the scheme for the final construction. Even in larger measure than with the engineers specialized in 'production', the responsibility of the future rested with the 'engineers of the soul'" (Boia 1999, p.152).

It is in this description of socialist realism that one can read as dominant the utopian project of the Enlightenment (the humanistic project as a form of scientific planning) uncovering socialist realism as truly an incipient form of socialist humanism. Only because socialist realism implies a perspective wholly circumscribed to the Communist movement, a utopian belief in a new humanism set as the only discourse in society, and only because such a discourse allows for the installation of a governing machine of the imaginary, **can the difference between utopia and reality, between dream and science, really disappear**. Only thus can the name of realism be ascribed to planned dreams of utopia (the new man) propagated according to the hero mirror-mechanism. Because, for the true believer his faith's utopia of the ideal world is the true reality of the world, gradually and ineluctably manifesting itself throughout history. In a simple reading, while the extent to which that utopia has been confirmed in society gives the measure of realism, the extent to which the utopia remains unfulfilled gives the measure

of the romantic dream. On the whole, this quest to adjust the world according to the reality it should manifest is called socialist realism: “Here does truth reside, for some curious, for others inexplicable: why socialist realism by studying reality is also romantic. And nevertheless it is simple: in his quality of a realist, he confirms the surrounding socialist reality; as a visionary romantic he dreams the world of tomorrow, he feels it, searches for it, calls for its fulfillment and embodies it” (Stanomir 2005i, p.181).

Ultimately, then, socialist realism and socialist humanism are expressions of the same activity, namely, the description of the world according to a utopia which allows for the prescription of ideal heroes at the level of the imaginary. At the core of this mechanism lies a similar utopian nucleus, of a humanistic kind: the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself, and the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good. “The good” pertains to the planned utopia while ‘something greater’ refers to anything from the Communist Party to the nation, from the workers to the people and to the entire humanity. In short, any imaginary hero requires an imagined community of reference and an ideal program that can guide his development. The nucleus is humanistic, because the hero engages with a humanistic project (The new Man or humanity is the source and ultimate aim of this project) by attempting to become the reflection of humanistic values – qualities which together form the Good.

A communist hero, not motivated by the betterment of mankind, and acting not in accordance with the highest standards of humanity, is simply inconceivable. If in socialist realism, the heroic focus is primarily on the workers and the ideal values that

should guide them, during ‘socialist humanism,’ this focus incorporates the people and the nation, later on addressing directly humanity. In all stages, however, the idea is to produce the exponent of perfect humanity, that is, the New Man.

Socialist Humanism as the second period/discourse of the mirror-mechanism

Socialist humanism (1964-1989) has been previously described as a discourse under the auspices of Party rule, which makes way for a ‘generalized humanism,’ able to disseminate the desired Socialist mentality within the population at large. As formerly discussed, this ‘generalized humanism’ was already part of socialist realism, forming the nucleus of the mirror-mechanism.

Because of de-Stalinization casting a negative light on the former regime of Dej, and because of the main audience of the Communist Party being extended from workers to the entire population, the humanistic element emerges as central to the new, Ceaușescu-led regime.

Externally, this turn towards humanism was also motivated by the revisionist projects launched in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 60s in order to establish a ‘socialism with a human face.’ These projects assumed that the system of power could be humanized and democratized from within (Tismăneanu 1997, p.82), necessity which had come into focus because of de-Stalinization. Newly established, Ceaușescu’s regime had only to gain by posing as the standard bearer of similar ideals. Firstly, such alignment guaranteed an increase in popularity. Secondly, it ensured the capture of the discursive space alternative movements could have occupied to challenge the state.

With humanism being such a strong revisionist option both inside and outside the Communist Bloc, it is understandable why the Ceaușescu regime chose to adopt this discourse as its political platform⁶⁹: “Socialist humanism was a central symbolic point of reference for the policy of the Romanian Communist Party. This was the most abstract name given to the Communists’ vision about how society should be governed” (Preda 2004).

In conclusion, humanism can be seen to function as an excellent binomial structure, constantly forming the background for the appropriation of other powerful discourses. If in socialist realism, the emphasis is on the proletariat emerging as the leading social force in the liberation of humanity (through the discourse of Marxism/Leninism), in socialist humanism, this emphasis is turned towards the nation. Finally, in what follows, the rest of this thesis will test the assumption that this discourse corresponds to the entire period of 1964-1989 by comparing against it (and against the hero-mirror mechanism), in terms of compatibility, some of the main cultural discourses (in terms of public impact) of this period. It shall be remarked here that for reasons of structure, all discourses of the period mentioned (i.e., 1964-1989) will be classified under the notion of “socialist humanism,” but that is only for reasons of periodization and so as to form a basic hypothesis against which they can be tested.

⁶⁹ After its disappearance in 1989, the term would re-emerge 15 years later as the term defining the political platform of the Union comprising the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR) (Preda 2004).

CHAPTER 7

The Turn to Nationalism

Despite the general assumption that the Party willingly adopted the nationalist ideology in order to obtain support of the masses (and of the intelligentsia) and to limit the influence of the USSR, not a lot is clear about how or why exactly the Romanian Communist regime turned towards the ideology of the nation. As the different interpretations below show, this matter merits more investigation.

The Elite Theory

The attempt by Stelian Tănase (“Elite și societate,” 1998) to explain the governance of the Dej regime through the role and formation of the Communist elite also provides an interpretation of the turn to nationalism.

By discrediting the essence of the system, namely its ideology, the 1956 de-Stalinization campaign opened the doors for two competing factions within the Russian Communist elite (Tănase 1998, p.137): those against the cult of personality (the reformists or the revisionists) and those still in support of Stalinism (the dogmatists or the conservative wing). The period between 1953 and 1964 was thus marked by instability and conflict at the level of almost all Communist elites. In general, the periods, from 1953 and until the Hungarian Revolution from 1956, and from 1961 to 1964 (when Khrushchev, with his program of reform, is ousted from power by conservative forces), can be seen as

dominated by attempts at de-Stalinization and revisionism. In contradistinction, the period between 1957 and 1961 can be seen as a return to dogmatic Stalinism.

Starting with 1953, then, the Romanian elite, ruling a party with very little social support at home and heavily dependent on the USSR, is confronted with a crisis that targets its very existence and identity.

That the process of de-Stalinization could anytime lead to the direct replacement of the current Romanian elite with a less Stalinist one constitutes only the most visible part of this challenge. For in the background, through measures such as decentralization, collective governance, less emphasis on planned economy, the limitation of censorship, etc., the de-Stalinization reforms advocated by Khrushchev imply nothing else than the elite's separation from its main source of power, namely, that of the violent control of society.

Similarly daunting is the 1962 economic strategy advocated by Kremlin, which envisaged countries like Romania having to renounce their own program of industrialization in order to provide raw materials and agricultural products to the more developed countries in the "CMEA."⁷⁰ To a Romanian Communist elite that saw industrialization on a Stalinist model as the sole answer to the national problem of modernization⁷¹ (namely, the problem of catching up with the more developed countries while possessing a massive agricultural population) this seemed simply unacceptable: "The leaders that emerged from the postwar RCP struggles of the late 1940s and early 1950s were thoroughly committed to ending their country's relative backwardness

⁷⁰ The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON, CMEA, or CAME), 1949–1991.

⁷¹ "They saw their own dictatorship being motivated by the necessity of a powerful state, which would concentrate resources for an intense effort of 'modernization'" (Tănase 1998, p.212).

through a program of heavy industrial development and rapid agricultural collectivization, even at the expense of straining their relations with the Soviet Union. Romania's insistence on the priority of national goals over the principle of specialization within the CMEA conformed with this outlook" (Crowther 1988, p.64).

Starting with 1962, then, the Romanian Party elite begins to respond to these challenges by establishing industrialization and elite autonomy as main priorities. As Tănase (1998, p.229) observes, a first turn towards nationalism appears when the elite attempts to win popular support by linking 'industrialization' with the nationalist feeling. Starting with 1962, the Party looks to expand its autonomy by increasing the numbers recruited in the Party apparatus (by 50 percent between 1962 and 1964) so as to gain wider support from society: in terms of the selection process, class criteria are replaced with support for nationalism (as a reaction against the exploitation by the USSR) and industrialization (now associated with the concept of 'national sovereignty') (p.219). Essentially, this newfound nationalism also acts as a mode to secure the direct help of professional elites with the industrialization agenda (p.256). At the same time, in order to derive mass support, the Party also attempts reconciliation with the population through adoption of a patriotic perspective and through the 1962-1965 de-Sovietization of the public space (pp.193-224). These last measures succeed in increasing the popularity of the regime significantly.

To sum it up, while the problem of industrialization leads the elite to identify with and to call for a patriotic and nationalistic feeling within its own ranks and institutions (in order to increase its autonomy and alleviate its feelings of insecurity), at the mass level this call is reflected in the capturing of a widespread anti-Soviet feeling through the de-

Sovietization of the public space. In conclusion, by connecting national feeling with industrialization and autonomy, and patriotism with popular anti-Soviet feeling, the Party effectively opens the door for a nationalistic ideology between the years 1962-1964/1965.

Thus, by 27 April 1964, and after the changes described above, the Romanian Communist elites feel secure enough to publish a ‘declaration of independence,’ which can be taken as the official starting point⁷² for the turn to a nationalistic ideology. The document, reflecting concerns with industrialization and national autonomy, proclaims the right of any sovereign Marxist/Leninist state to choose its own path of socialist development without the interference of the USSR:

“Bearing in mind the diversity of the conditions of socialist construction, there are not and there can be no unique patterns and recipes; no one can decide what is and what is not correct for other countries or parties. It is up to every Marxist-Leninist party; it is a sovereign right of each socialist state, to elaborate, choose, or change the forms and methods of socialist construction ... It is the exclusive right of each party independently to work out its political line, its concrete objectives, and the ways and means of attaining them, by creatively applying the general truths of Marxism-Leninism and the conclusions it arrives at from an attentive analysis of the experience of the other Communist and workers’ parties” (RCP Central Committee 27th of April 1964, cited in Tismăneanu 2003, p.182)

⁷² “1964 is the year in which for the first time the behaviour of the Party is being talked about in terms of a ‘national direction’” (Ștefan Borbély, in Borbély et al. (2002)].

The declaration was meant to block the propagation of Khrushchev's reforms, and this was achieved inasmuch as conservative forces ousted Khrushchev in October 1964. As a conservative reaction to reform, the proclamation, rather than advocating a new socialist model, demanded the return to previous Stalinist models. This, along with other issues⁷³, explains why the declaration succeeded in affirming national autonomy within rather than against the Soviet or Communist Bloc. As Tănase (1998, p.230) observes, the declaration marked, paradoxically, a moment of continuity rather than of discontinuity: the same elite that contributed, in total subordination to the USSR elite, to the 'satellite-ization' and Stalinization of Romania, was now developing a discourse of autonomy. Ultimately, as Crowther (1988, p.66) points out, the significance of this declaration of independence lies in Romania's loss of economic support from the Soviet Union in the context in which the path of civil/state accommodation pursued by other EE countries (after de-Stalinization) had already been declined. In this context, the only developmental path left available was an internal one⁷⁴, and its continued pursuance during later years would ultimately establish the peculiar, if not unique, character of the Romanian Communist regime: "The Romanian political elite was thus impelled to look inward for a solution to its problems. By the close of the transition period RCP leaders were feeling their way toward a uniquely Romanian political strategy; one which differed significantly from those of the other East European state-socialist regimes" (idem).

⁷³ For example, 1) the maintenance of strict control over population at all times, throughout crises in the Eastern Bloc and during the turn to nationalism, 2) the refraining from publicly humiliating or condemning the Soviet Union, from denouncing the Warsaw Treaty or from proclaiming neutrality, and 3) the lack of any attempts to assert a new ideology (Tănase 1998, p.230).

⁷⁴ Essentially, both the model of autarkic development with which the Ceaușescu regime will come to almost fully identify, and the corresponding phenomenon of "cultural protectionism" that is "protochronism" (Verdery 1991, pp.179-180, 183) can be traced back to this moment.

In addition to Tănase's (1998) attempt to give a coherent account of the Romanian turn to nationalism, other factors that center around the year 1964 must also be considered.

Firstly, that by bringing the peasantry under complete control in 1962 (when collectivization is completed), the Communist elite gained complete control of society (p.187) and thus started requiring an ideology that appealed to all the masses (and not only to the workers).

Secondly, that the first generations of intellectuals and professional elites produced entirely through the Communist system of education made its appearance in the 1960s (p.195). These elites had to be co-opted in the Party apparatus, thus making the link between nationalist feeling and autonomy an interesting ideological alternative.

Thirdly, that the political detainees of the previous regime were released in 1964 (p.231). In relation to this, Borbély (Borbély et al. 2002) describes the nationalist turn as a subtle mode of capturing the nationalist feeling associated with the intellectuals formed prior to the Communist regime: "These people come out of prison, they start talking about the old times, the majority of them are part of the Legionary Movement and nationalistic, members of some of the historical parties, they come with a cultural offer, restitutive and alternative, and the Power does everything to capture this message, in order to give a relative character to its social impact through the suggestion of legitimacy. Which fits really well because it has as corollary relative political and doctrinal independence from Moscow. Here, in my opinion, psychologically, the whole thing was very well worked out, because to allow this message to circulate at will, to

become a sort of idyllic or energetic ‘passé-ism,’ represented a danger. In the moment in which it is introduced in the ideology, into the doctrine of the party, already then it becomes something else, it is not as illicit as it could be. Here I think that Dej and those in power have disarmed an ideological bomb, a cultural bomb: they legislated, and essentially removed the detonator.”

Fourthly, that since 1953, revisionist projects had advocated two main directions: a return to the socialist humanism promoted by the early Marx in the West and the sort of nationalistic ideology adopted through either Titoism or the Hungarian Revolution. These could not have failed to influence the Communist elite in Romania:⁷⁵ “We must act for the development of socialist features in our activity, of socialist humanism, to make from the Romanian saying ‘A fi om de omenie’ (‘To be a humane man’/ ‘To be a man of humanity’) a new saying “A fi comunist de omenie” (‘To be a humane Comunist’)” (Ceașescu, in Ceașescu et al. 1971, p.194).

Out of these observations some major questions arise: Why does the Romanian Communist Party operate major turns towards nationalism and also towards an own version of ‘socialist humanism’ at around the same time? Which discourse is the main one, or the more important? Are we even talking about two or more distinct discourses? Do they operate in different spheres? Are these discourses art discourses and to what extent? Or are they policy discourses? Are these incipient or already developed

⁷⁵ In fact, Deletant (1998, p.70) argues that after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, “Dej began to distinguish between the soviet model and the Soviet Union,” converting himself, while still a convinced adept of the Leninist-Stalinist model of industrialization, to “national-communism.” However, talking about the “humanist approach to socialism that emerged in Poland and Hungary from within the communist elite” after the death of Stalin, Tismăneanu (2003, p.80) argues exactly the opposite: that “[i]ronically, documents from the long-secret archives indicate that no such critical temptation occurred among Romanian communists.” Which documents those are it is not mentioned.

discourses in 1964? Admittedly, considering the lack of research about socialist humanism as a discourse in Communist Romania, this paper can only underline the fact that an investigation of such themes is needed.

In my opinion, there are at least two reasons for which socialist humanism might have been appealing to the Communist party in 1965.

The first reason is that inasmuch as the conceptual sphere of the word ‘humanity’ extends beyond that of the word ‘nation,’ socialist humanism, as an abstract term, simply contains more possibilities. In fact, because of this, nationalist values or appeals can always be framed as a subset of a socialist humanist discourse. The socialist humanism phrase simply has more policy appeal to a Party looking for an abstract, positive and catchy concept that can be quickly shifted to justify a large array of measures and to cover multiple discursive fields. At the same time, until 1964/65 at least, the language of humanism had been more entrenched in Marxist and Communist discourses/theories than that of nationalism, thus providing a more familiar terrain.

The second reason is that except for the recovery of a general appeal to humanistic values, Romanian socialist humanism has almost nothing in common with the socialist humanism of the revisionist kind⁷⁶. While the revisionist project seeks to reform the socialist system through its ‘humanization’ (comprising measures such as decentralization, economic liberalization, reform of the administration, more democratic structures, freedom of the press, even a civil society etc.), the Romanian Party sees the term functioning only at the level of values and ethics, that is, as a mode of advocating a

⁷⁶ This also explains the apparent contradiction between the adoption of the term socialist humanism and Ceaușescu’s dislike and condemnation of revisionists.

change in the moral character of individuals. It would appear then, that initially, the term was taken on because of de-Stalinization, and in order to counter the negative image of the abusive party activist. This was of strategic use to Ceaușescu and his regime, which could thus build a positive image through contrast with the Dej regime.⁷⁷ From there on, the term somehow brought to light the pre-existent connection between socialism and the ideal of the new man and of the new society, namely, the old humanism of Marxist-Leninism. Arguably, this linkage set the stage for the recuperation of an Enlightenment-like discourse aimed at promoting general models for ethical behaviour and for directing cultural strategies. In comparison with socialist humanism, the nationalist discourse lends itself less to such applications, its strength deriving mostly from its capacity to function as a motivating ideology and as a unifying force (in relation to the interests of the state apparatus).

Nevertheless, it must be observed that, at the time, neither socialist humanism nor the nationalist discourse was filled with enough substance to demand a new political model. Both discourses sought a return, or a continuation of the Stalinist model. Both were essentially subject to its priorities. In this respect, social humanism constitutes a continuation of socialist realism, reason for which, paradoxically, the period 1965-1989 in Romania has been described by some (Cordoș 2003, pp.12-14; Simuț 2008, 2008i; Liseu 2004), at the cultural level, mainly as another attempt at socialist realism.

⁷⁷ “By exposing Gheorghiu-Dej’s role in the Stalinist atrocities of the 1950s, Ceaușescu fostered his own image as the restorer of legality. The rehabilitation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and other communist leaders executed or imprisoned under Gheorghiu-Dej enhanced the general secretary's posture as a custodian of socialist legality and advocate of democratization” (Tismăneanu 2003, p.199).

“The Indigenization of Marxism” Thesis

Very different from the elite theory mentioned above, Verdery’s (1991) cultural foray into the cultural politics of Ceaușescu’s Romania targets directly the issue of national ideology.

If the elite theory presupposes the existence of a subject as central in the formation of discourses, Verdery’s approach sees actors themselves as a property or function of discourses. At a general level, the main thesis advanced by Verdery contains two parts.

Firstly, Verdery (1991, p.12) sees “the years between 1947 and 1989” as the “locus of a battle between two powerful discourses: Marxism, and the discourse of the nation.” In this encounter ‘the nation,’ “fortified by many decades of work that had given it an institutionalized base” (p.12) eventually prevails over Marxism, subordinating and subverting its terms in its favour. Secondly, Verdery (p.4) identifies the disruption of Marxism through the discourse of the nation as “a major element in destroying the Party’s legitimacy,” and thus, as a main factor in the fall of Communism.

In contradistinction to Tănase’s theory, which assumes an empty space, or an unformed and incipient nationalistic Party discourse, Verdery’s approach has the advantage of bringing into consideration the powerful pre-existing discourse of the nation, considered at all times actively engaged with the Communist language of politics. Identifying the discourse of the nation as domestic and Marxism as a discourse “imposed by force, from outside,” her research starts with the following question: “How did powerful preexisting discourses, such as the national one, domesticate the intruder, becoming in their turn part

of its trajectory as the two bonded together toward forming a new hegemonic order?”
(p.139)

Part of the answer lies, according to Verdery, with the deep discursive structure uncovered through the tracing back of the nationalist thread. As observed by writers such as Boia (2005, p.121) and Verdery (1991, pp.46-71), nationalist ideology had emerged as a main discourse in the context of the formation of the modern Romanian state and from the interaction of very strong diverging views on the relationships between national culture and the European model, that is, between local tradition and Occidental values. According to Verdery (1991, pp.46-71), three types of groups or orientations were formed within this discursive space: the “Westernizers” - for whom Romania rightfully belongs to the European space and is thus compatible with the European model, the “Indigenists” – for whom Romania has a national essence from which an unadulterated model of organic culture and political organization must be allowed to emerge, without foreign interference, and the “Pro-Orientalists” or the ‘Orthodoxists’ – favoring the East and particularly Eastern Christianity as the model for cultural/social organization. Debates between groups corresponding, in some way or another, to these three positions, Verdery (p.122) concludes, have pushed the national idea to become the master discourse in Romania, structuring all other discourses, including the Marxist one.

Verdery’s (1991, p.122) explanation differs, thus, radically from that of Tănase (1998) and Tismăneanu (2003), in that it assumes that the national discourse forced the Communist Party onto its domain and not the other way around:

“Why did a Marxist-Leninist regime employing a symbolic-ideological mode of control give so much weight to an ideology that was national? This question has been handled at greater or lesser length by a number of political scientists, most of whom see the answer in the regime’s need for public support, either in general or in quarrel with the Soviet Union. Nationalism, it is argued, was the Ceaușescu’s leadership’s main instrument for legitimating its rule with the populace and for keeping the intellectuals coopted or subservient (Croan 1989, Crowther 1988, Gilberg 1990, Jowitt 1971, King 1980, Schopflin 1974, Tismăneanu 1989).

I do not adopt this line of argument. I see the national ideology that became a hallmark of Ceaușescu’s Romania as having several sources only one of which was its purposeful instrumentalization by the Party. To a considerable extent, I argue, the Party was forced onto the terrain of national values (not unwillingly) under pressure from others, especially intellectuals, whom it could fully engage in no other manner.

These intellectuals were drawing upon personal concerns and traditions of inquiry that made the Nation a continuing and urgent reality for them despite its official interdiction. They were also engaged in conflicts among themselves for which, as before, the Nation provided a basic idiom. To use a different phrasing, Romanian intellectuals were utilizing something – the Nation- that we might call a master symbol, one having the capacity to dominate the field of symbols and discourses in which it was employed, pressing the meanings of other terms and symbols in its own direction.”

From this perspective, control of the idea of the nation became essential to the Party, because it represented both the position from which the Party could most efficiently be

challenged and also the position from which Party support could be best consolidated. In a sense, everything in Romania had been somehow defined through the idea of the nation or through claims relating to it, including, as Verdery (1991, pp.63-71) notices, the entire specter of academic disciplines: “If national ideology struck outside observers as the most salient feature of Romanian politics, this was not because the Party emphasized nothing else but because the Nation was so well entrenched discursively in Romanian life. It was the one subject that guaranteed to get Romanians’ attention, because so many of them were using it” (p.125).

While the Party was initially just drawn into the nationalist discourse⁷⁸, its further attempt to control its rhetoric meant that the door was open for competing claims by different cultural groups regarding the value of the nation, which augmented the national discourse even more: “As the Party’s attempt to monopolize culture sharpened conflict among the producers of symbols and images, different groups began to compete by recourse to national values ... The older disputes among indigenist and pro-western definitions of the Nation reappeared, all sides claiming to represent the true national values” (p.126). Starting with the late 60s, the Ceaușescu regime gradually chose to identify explicitly, in this debate, with the position of the Indigenists - for whom Romania had a national essence from which an unadulterated model of organic culture

⁷⁸ In fact, the turn of the Communist Party toward the discourse of the Nation can be seen to have occurred not only because of cultural factors but especially because of a number of factors that could be ascribed to the political context through which the Party was formed and in which it activated: 1) the lack of an educated communist elite profoundly embedded in Marxist theory (which had disappeared with the early purges), 2) the lack of legitimacy of the elite in power, in the absence of nationalism, 3) the attraction to identify with an indigenist position rather than with a discourse imposed monolithically and hierarchically from outside, 4) the challenge, in the context of de-Stalinization, to find another governing ideology in order to replace the Stalinist ideology, 5) the need to govern through ideological control in the absence of decent levels of economic prosperity, 6) the powerful influence, not only of nationalism as a pre-existent discourse, but the importance, at the level of policy, of the nation-state as a unit to be administered by the Communist Party.

and political organization could emerge under the right conditions. This process, through which the Marxist discourse was displaced and subverted through a nationalist discourse, is therefore referred to, by Verdery, as the ‘indigenization of Marxism:’ “As to the problem of the nation in the conditions of socialism, we have to say that the victory of the new system has opened up the road for the achievement of a true national unity, for strengthening and developing the nation on new bases. On freeing itself from class oppression, the working class became the exponent of the entire nation and assumed the responsibility for the development of national unity on new, superior bases, for the prosperity of the socialist nation” (Ceașescu 1972, cited in Verdery 1991, p.45).⁷⁹

In conclusion, while in general agreement with Verdery’s comments about the cultural-political importance of the nationalistic discourse and its subversion of a Marxist discourse [though, not of the Communist one, in my opinion], one must emphasize the active background role of a third discourse, that of humanism. From this perspective, the new hegemonic order Verdery speaks about implies not only the bonding of the Marxist and nationalist discourses, but their hybridization and articulation through the humanist discourse. In a very simplistic way, it can be assumed that while Marxist-Leninism functioned as an ideology for getting into power and taking control of a society (political strategy), the nationalist discourse served to obtain the support of the majority of the population and to govern a society (governance), this while the humanist discourse visibly employed by Ceașescu in order to get into power (on a de-Stalinization agenda)

⁷⁹ Contrast this with the original socialist views expressed by a former member of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (1893- 1948): “The nation is a sentimental ideological-utopian fantasy that does not exist” (C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea cited in Verdery 1991, p.53).

operated continuously but mostly in the background, as the motivating impulse and ethical foundation for the attainment of the utopian society, features to be constantly readjusted by the Party in their articulation to diverse specific practices, aims and prescriptions.

“Romanian Culture between Communism and Nationalism:” a critique of Verdery

In his essay, “Romanian Culture between Communism and Nationalism,” parts of which have surfaced online in the cultural journal “Revista 22,” Mircea Martin offers a direct critique of Verdery’s ‘Indigenization of Marxism’ thesis.

Firstly, Martin (2002iv) argues that Verdery assumes a certain continuity of the nationalistic discourse, for which no foundation can be found, in order to fit with the direction of her essay. National ideology, he states, is not the same throughout the whole Romanian Communist period, and its effects cannot be considered to be the same.

Martin (2002iv, ¶ 2-8) distinguishes, then, three different phases in the state development of national ideology, and two main orientations (a protochronist and an anti-protochronist one) in terms of how intellectuals relate to the discourse of the nation.

For him, national ideology commences in the 1960s as a form of resistance against the USSR’s colonial type of influence, more a “counter-ideology” (idem, ¶ 32) than an ideology, signaling openness towards Europeanism and universalism. Next, starting with the July theses of 1971, the center-stage is taken by the attempt to promote a Maoist-like cultural revolution (idem, ¶ 33), which Martin (2002iv, ¶ 23) interprets as “a clear

abandonment of nationalism and the restoration, within culture, of a firm and orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideology.” Finally, the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s see the reinstatement of the nationalistic ideology, this time, in the extremist, ethnicist, traditionalist, isolationist and strongly anti-Western variant developed by Eugen Barbu at “Săptămâna” (a widely distributed cultural magazine with strong backing from the Party). These stages are overlooked by Verdery (1991) who, in Martin’s (2002iv, ¶ 3, 7) opinion, also assumes that different groups reconstruct the same idea of the nation.

Instead of that, Martin argues that each group recreated its own image about the Nation, the protochronists assuming a narrow, ethnicist, traditionalist and isolationist discourse which later became institutionalized as official discourse, and the anti-protochronists, a discourse assuming modernity and the idea of Europe as central to Romanian culture⁸⁰.

Secondly, Martin (2002iv, ¶ 8) accuses Verdery of sharing in the neo-Marxist view that “identifies national ideology with nationalism, more precisely, with extremist nationalism.” The deeper critique, which will emerge later in more concrete forms, is that Verdery tends to value Marxist notions over the idea of the nation. For this reason, Martin (2002iv, ¶ 11-13) sees it important to argue that while the 1949-1960 Marxist emphasis on ‘class’ and ‘class-struggle’ (and not on “internal diversity”⁸¹ as Verdery

⁸⁰ This point, is to a considerable extent, an unfair criticism of Verdery, for she clearly states that she sees the discourse of the Nation gaining a center-stage position because of the competing claims launched by different groups with regard to the idea of the Nation.

⁸¹ Essentially, this is the paragraph around which Martin constructs his critique of Verdery (it is evident that while Verdery was referring here to Marxism as a theoretical outlook and a cultural discourse, Martin has interpreted the same paragraph as referring to the Marxist-Leninist political-economical orientation of the regime): “As I showed in chapters 4 through 6 especially, the diligent intellectual work one or another group expended on the ‘Nation’ deconstructed the categories and the teleologies of Marxism, substituting a push toward national unity in place of internal diversity, and replacing Marxism’s progressive, discontinuous time with the continuities of the Romanian people. Not all intellectual projects fitted this exactly: Prodan’s Horea, for example, concentrated on one class within a class – differentiated society and plotted its narrative progressively – Prodan, remember, was analytically a Marxist” (Verdery 1991, pp.313-314).

would have it⁸²) had produced a state of continuous warfare and aggression, the introduction of the idea of the nation in the 1960s (a sort of “blessing” by comparison) had marked a period of relative peace and freedom, and a return to normality: “The national idea at the beginning of the 60s came ...to overcome this permanent threat, that anyone could be the target, meaning, the victim of class struggle, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, including the proletarians themselves!”

Next, Verdery is charged with two instances of overgeneralization, namely, with equating the situation in the sphere of culture with that in the larger society (*idem*, ¶ 18), and with identifying the nationalism of the entire Communist period with the extremist nationalism from the 80s (*idem*, ¶ 18-22). Here, Martin (*idem*, ¶ 18) contends that while the cultural sphere had witnessed some changes in the direction of liberalization with the early nationalistic discourse, these were never reflected in the economic structure of society, leaving him to conclude that the nationalism of the 1960s emerged as a form compatible with Marxist-Leninism, and not as a form of displacement.

This leads us into the main criticism which Mircea Martin (2002iv) brings to Verdery’s (1991) work on Romania: 1) that she assumes the existence of a pure Marxist discourse in Communist societies, and 2) that she values this Marxist discourse over the discourse of the nation.

Verdery is wrong, therefore, to assume that the subversion of official Marxism through the nationalist discourse led to the fall of the Communist regime in Romania, with Ceaușescu the resulting main victim of this displacement. According to Martin (2002iv,

⁸² In direct opposition to Verdery (see below), Martin (2002iv, ¶ 24) argues in fact that, in the 60s, “the national idea served primarily the acceptance and promotion of diversity,” but that such diversity and pluralism could not be fully attained because of the limitations imposed by Marxism.

¶ 18-22), until the 80s at least, the Communist regime was too strong for it to be pushed, against its will, towards nationalism. If a more national path was being pursued in the 1960s and 1970s, this was so because the national idea seemed compatible with the interests of Marxism-Leninism at the time (idem, ¶ 23). From this perspective, the discourse of the nation was not disrupting or displacing the Marxist discourse, but rather was a form co-opted by it. National ideology, as Martin (2003) puts it, did not lead to an authoritarian form of socialism. It was rather the maintenance of the authoritarian form of socialism that demanded the incorporation of nationalism as a motivating factor.

Verdery is even more wrong to assume that a pure Marxist discourse structured, at any point in time, the Romanian Communist society, or for that matter, the society of any other Communist state. Communist regimes, Martin (2003, ¶ 21) observes, have been more cynical in their use of Marxism than even its adversaries, because of the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the maintenance of power and control. Starting with Lenin and continuing with Stalin, there is no such thing as a pure Marxist discourse in Communist societies (¶ 13). However, Martin (¶ 37) argues, Communist regimes should be seen as the expression of Marxism, even when this expression is reduced ideologically to the Marxist-Leninist concept of the unique ruling Party, that is, ‘the dictatorship of the Party.’ This concept of the unique ruling Party (a party that rules dictatorially through state-terrorism and mass-supervision) forms that tough Marxist-Leninist nucleus which resisted unchallenged between 1949 and 1989, and which thus gives Romania its essential Communist, and not Nationalistic, character: “In any case, at no moment in time, in Romania, did the national(ist) discourse enter into contradiction or even just competition with the principle of the Party leadership of all activities” (¶ 9). In fact,

Ceaușescu, through movements like Protochronism, sought not so much to affirm a certain national idea or a traditional Romanian-ness⁸³, but rather to insert the Communist Party into the history of the nation as its uncontested leader, and into the discourse of the nation, as its main regulatory force (idem, “Nationalist sau comunist?,” para. 9).

From this perspective, Martin’s (idem, para. 10) conclusion reverses, in the end, that reached by Verdery: “In fact, his objective [Ceaușescu’s] was the communization of the Nation, not the nationalization of Communism or the indigenization of Marxism.”

Conclusions to the Three Theories Regarding the Turn to Nationalism

Lack of consensus regarding what had caused the turn to nationalism?

As pointed out initially, despite the general assumption that the turn to nationalism can be explained away as a strategy secured by the Party in order to obtain the support of the masses (and of the intelligentsia) and to limit the influence of the USSR, the whole issue proves more elusive when the three theories discussed above are put together.

While the first theory identifies the turn to nationalism as a reaction started by the elite, which, because of insecurity, moved for autonomy and de-Sovietization, thus encouraging patriotism (with other competing factors also possible activating causes), the second theory describes the same process as the delegitimization of Marxism

⁸³ Martin (2003, “Timpul progresiv al marxismului” și “timpul plat al Partidului,” para. 1-7) argues for example, that “systematization” – “systematization consisted largely of the demolition and reconstruction of existing villages, towns, and cities, in whole or in part, with the stated goal of turning Romania into a “multilaterally developed socialist society” [Wikipedia, “Systematization (Romania)”], together with the destruction of traditional Christian churches or of vestiges such as the Văcărești complex, actions to which even the protochronists were publicly opposed, gives the measure of Ceaușescu’s Communist beliefs.

through a discourse of the nation, so powerful, that it succeeded in forcing the Communist Party onto its own terrain. All this, while the third theory posits several turns to nationalism, depicting the one from the 60s more as a positive return to national culture, with its European and humanistic dimensions, and the one from the 80s, as a turn towards an excessive, anti-Western, narrow nationalism – in either case, any turn to nationalism during Ceaușescu’s rule being interpreted as a personal strategy designed to enhance his own status. Most importantly, as part of the third theory, nationalism is seen as a discourse limited to the cultural sphere, that does not affect the economic order, and which therefore is, at all times, compatible with Marxist-Leninism and, in fact, subject to its priorities: hence, the expression “the communization of the nation” (directed at the “nationalization of communism” thesis proposed by Verdery) to describe ‘the turn to nationalism’ as Ceaușescu’s insertion of the nation into a Communist project.

In short, while one theory identifies the issue of autonomy/security as central to the turn to nationalism, another identifies the source of such a turn in the cultural dominance of the discourse of the nation, and, yet another, in the turns to nationalism acting at different times either 1) as a counter-ideology, a space of freedom, and normality, emerging with the demise of the colonizing Soviet influence (not to be understood as Marxist-Leninist or Stalinist) or 2) as a Machiavellian strategy designed to consolidate Ceaușescu’s cult of personality and his neo-Stalinist regime.

It terms of agency, these explanations are quite discordant: 1) an elite group, 2) a discourse, 3) the spontaneous expression of the cultural space after colonial involvement - naturally including a concern with the idea of the nation (the intellectuals), and 4) the desire of an individual leader, namely Ceaușescu, for personal power. As exemplified in

the discussion above, similar disagreements center around the issue of the timing of the turn to nationalism, the continuity and strength of such a discourse over the entire Communist period, and the nature of the discourse, both intrinsically and as manifested in relation to official Communist discourse.

If these theories indicate something clearly, this is that the problem of the turn to nationalism is far from having been agreed upon in any significant manner, pointing to a need for a diversity of additional approaches.

Other assessments regarding the nature of Ceaușescu's regime generally point to different and sometimes opposed determinants of its national character

Kolakowski's (2005, p.792) view of Stalinism as the continuation of a Leninism itself contained in Marxism (though as one of many variants possible) is well-known: "The equation: truth = the proletarian world-view = Marxism = the party's world-view = the pronouncements of the party leadership = those of the supreme leader is wholly in accordance with Lenin's version of Marxism." Another interpretation (idem, pp.664-856) for it is given by this parallel equation: "dictatorship of the proletariat" (Marx) = "dictatorship of the party" (Lenin) = "loyalty to the ruler" (Logos Incarnate). If attempting to judge Ceaușescu and his regime against the Kolakowski scale, it can be observed that Ceaușescu ticks all the boxes for Stalinism except in two major respects: 1) the features of mass repression and terror and 2) in identifying himself as "the coryphaeus of science" and as the ultimate interpreter of Marxism-Leninism in all academic disciplines and fields of life (Pollock 2006, p.1), meaning, as Logos incarnate.

Ceaușescu's obvious emotion at receiving, at 55 (in 1973), the title of "Doctor Honoris Causa" (and in his mind, the title of an intellectual) from the University of Bucharest is quite telling in this respect (Ujica 2010, 1:33:00 – 1:37:00). Whatever the case, it cannot be said that Ceaușescu displayed that "urgency" of Stalin "to become a great theorist in the tradition of Marx, Engels, and Lenin," or that he similarly "identified himself as a scholar and saw that identity as a central component of being a successful Marxist-Leninist leader" (p.217). Such an inability to build up his reputation as a 'great theorist in the tradition of Marx, Engels, and Lenin,' (or even to the level of Stalin) would go some way in explaining why Ceaușescu had chosen to construct his legitimacy around the statues and myths of national historical figures (and around the national idea) instead. For these two reasons, then, Ceaușescu and his regime deserve to be viewed, according to the Kolakowski scale, more as Leninist than Stalinist.

Based on the continuation of two essential features, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and the abolition of private property, Martin (2003) interprets the same regime as "Leninist-Stalinist communism" but not as a "nationalist regime." Furthermore, because of its "mass-terror and surveillance," the Ceaușescu regime is seen as a variant of "neo-Stalinism," while, because of its minority policies and restrictions of contact with the outside, the regime also appears described as "an extremist nationalism which could be considered, in fact, neo-fascism."

Verdery (1991, pp.121, 315) does not refer to the nature of the regime except to observe that it had switched (as part of its strategy of a "symbolic-ideological mode of control") from an ideology of Marxist-Leninism to an "Indigenist" one to such an extent that this had led to "the discursive constitution of a nationalism even more powerful than before."

The same Ceaușescu regime appears as Leninist to Chen (2007) but this is because of an interesting redefinition of Leninism in two key aspects usually associated with Stalinism. Chen (37) argues that, by being forced to link nationalism with socialism because of the need to support the Communist revolution in nation-states fighting for decolonization, Lenin had developed the pragmatic understanding that despite not being supposed to be national, the proletarian revolution would have to first proceed as a “nation-state revolution,” within national bounds. In the first case, this had led him to develop “a new theory of development and nation-building” (p.40) acting, in fact, as “a particular program of statist development designed to allow economically backward countries to catch up and accelerate the transition to Communism without going through fully developed capitalism (p.6).” Chen identifies this program with the Stalinist economic model. From a mild acknowledgment of the role of the nation, Chen (p.43) also maintains, Lenin was already moving towards a standpoint of “national Marxism:” “For Lenin, the goal of the proletarian revolution was ‘economic construction for the sake of national emancipation,’ which was to be achieved through ‘political, ideological, in short, <superstructural> means.’ Nations not yet prepared for industrialization could still adopt it as a state-led project and eventually catch up with and even surpass the West.” As Chen (pp.40-44) suggests, even at this level, Lenin only operates with the concept of the nation because this represents the largest political unit or collectivity available for rule to the Party. However, for Chen, both this sort of ‘national Marxism’ and Lenin’s ‘program of statist development’ are well confirmed in Ceaușescu’s Romania.

A similar argument is reflected in Gavrilă (2004), whose discursive analysis of policy documents and programs in the 70s reveals Romania's regime as "national-Communist" [Gavrilă (p.2) argues the term also applies for the entire period between 1957 and 1989]. At the theoretical level, a term such as "national-Communism" is justified because it had been foreshadowed by the Leninist notion of the "right to self-determination" (which provided enough leverage for Communist parties to pursue autonomy if mindful of the goal of a world-wide Communist revolution) (pp.7-8). At the discursive level, this term is validated through "the conceptual construct labelled by the regime as the 'socialist nation,'" construct which emerges as central to official discourse between 1964 and 1974. Essentially, this insertion of the nation in the socialist project is not motivated by nationalism but by the need to mobilize all the productive forces at the regime's disposal in fulfilment of the Leninist model of state-development: "Socialist nationalism, though nobody in RCP branded it like this (it was just 'the socialist nation'), became necessary in order to insure 'maximum nourishment of the material and human potential' that was crucial in efficient (de)(em)ployment of the forces of production for the achievement of the nation-building process – the MDSS [Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society]" (p.49). In conclusion then, this focus of Communist concerns on "bio-power" (Foucault 1978, p.140) is essentially responsible for the dual mobilization of the discourse of the nation and of "the RCP project of Enlightenment [that] was contained in its doctrine of socialist humanism" (Gavrilă 2004, p.49).

The acknowledged absence of the feature of mass-terror does not stop Tismăneanu (2003) from defining the regime of Ceaușescu as "mature Stalinism" (p.319), and as

“national Stalinism.” To a large extent this is so also because of Ceaușescu’s open admiration for Stalin, which had even led him to describe himself as a “modern Stalin” in August 1989 (RFE/RL, 2009). In Tismăneanu’s acceptance, therefore, Stalinism refers primarily to a type of personality, a despotic one, obsessed with absolute control, and, secondarily, to the repressive social system generated when such a personality becomes the absolute locus of power [which places Tismăneanu in the “totalitarian model” camp described by Gleason (1995)]. In that sense, far from relying on any authentic features of nationalism, aspects of Marxist-Leninist ideology, or fragments of dependency or “self-reliance” theories from the Global South (Rist, 1997) Ceaușescu’s dictatorship is only “a combination of Byzantine political rites, Stalinist methodology of deception and manipulation, and resentful fantasies evocative of some Third World tyranny” (Tismăneanu 2003, p.225).

With the 1964 ‘declaration of independence’ from Russia and the continuous refusal of the path of civil/state accommodation pursued by other EE countries the only developmental path Romania could pursue was an internal one, argues Crowther (1988, p.66), and this led to the Romanian regime becoming a unique political system, different from other EE countries, and which deserves to be studied on its own: “Marxist ideology and Leninist party organization were melded with the intense nationalism and paternalism of a peripheralized nineteenth century Balkan state to form a unique political/social entity. The outcome of this course of events was the emergence in Romania during the 1970s of a comprehensive political model that constitutes an extreme variant of state-socialism” (idem, p.109). The amazing insight of Crowther (pp.99-100), however, is the observation (well-founded if looking at the division of

Communist society according to classes, different types of councils such as the “Working Peoples’ Councils”, and “specialized mass organizations such as the Trade-unions, Communist Youth and Students Associations, Women’s Cooperatives, and Creative Artists Unions” etc.) that, in the end, the internal path of development followed by the Ceaușescu regime ended up reproducing Romania’s Far Right “Corporatist” model of the interwar era: “Not only does the current elite’s perception of autarkic industrial development as an imperative of national survival mirror the attitudes of Manoiilescu and his compatriots, but its state-directed design for development conforms in its essentials with his vision of corporatism” (p.156). Furthermore, Crowther (idem) considers “the idolisation of the Leader” as also of Romanian Far Right inspiration. In conclusion, his work establishes the national legacy of interwar Romania as essential to “Ceaușescuism,”⁸⁴ both in terms of state-development and in terms of its leader cult.

Attempting a synthesis of the three theories

Where, then, does this leave us with regard to the nationalistic discourse? The following is a quick attempt at a personal synthesis of the theories discussed above.

First of all, it is undeniable that a lot of factors tend to position the turn to nationalism as taking place between 1962 and 1964/6. The number of factors involved require, however, a multidimensional model, with further research undertaken on each axis to

⁸⁴ Crowther’s (1988, p.16) theory regarding the specific nature of Ceaușescu’s regime, or of “Ceaușescuism,” has also received support from research in the domain of reproductive policies (Pălășan 2009).

calibrate the overall influence of each factor. From what has been presented so far, a certain scenario can be assumed.

Clearly, at the time, the RCP elite found itself in an insecure position because of not wanting to accept Khrushchev's CMEA's proposals regarding its economy. This point has been well confirmed by Dragomir (2014)⁸⁵. The elite's subsequent move for autonomy opened the door for de-Sovietization, which slid into patriotism while also opening the cultural sphere for a revival of national culture. It is possible that the Party came to understand only gradually the powerful effects of a nationalistic discourse, both in terms of popular support and as a motivating ideology. The fact that somehow the USSR was partially involved as an advocate of de-Sovietization, and even of a move towards nationalism as a way of securing the foundations of external Communist regimes, cannot be ignored either. At the same time, it is however possible that the Party had somehow intuited the potential of (or maybe, just simply walked into realizing the need for) a nationalistic discourse prior to 1962, when the last social class opposing it, the peasantry, was completely brought under its control, signaling the need for a unifying ideology (one that could go beyond the notion of "class-struggle," rendered irrelevant by the success of the Communist elite in obtaining control over the whole society). That would explain the reform in the recruiting strategies within the Party apparatus and also the release from prison of the political detainees/intellectuals formed in the nationalistic tradition of the inter-war period. Yet another possible explanation could charge the elite of the Communist Party as having, subconsciously or maybe even

⁸⁵ Whether at any time the RCP elite also perceived the de-Stalinization reforms advocated by Khrushchev as another threat to its position is no longer as certain an argument as it once seemed (see Tănase 1998, p.138 discussed at the beginning of the chapter, or Tismăneanu 2003, p.168, versus Dragomir 2014, p.66).

consciously, internalized aspects of the nationalistic discourse prior to 1962 or even 1949, which then resulted in the later reforms of the 1962-1965. Bucur (2009, p.178) is adamant, for example, that the 1965 “overtly nationalist discourse about World War II” was “just a continuation of a vision Ceaușescu had been finessing since the 1950s” and not the ushering of “a new course.” Crowther (1988, p.64) comes close to the view above by admitting that nationalism “colored the political sensibilities of the [Dej] Romanian leadership,” although, not strongly enough to have caused by itself “the rupture with Moscow.” This, while an old Romanian communist like Alexandru Bârlădeanu, the key economist drafting the 1964 ‘declaration of independence’ and negotiating the CMEA agreement, and also an “alternate member of the politburo under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej from 1962 to 1965” (Tismăneanu et al. 2006), argues that Dej was a man of high intelligence and political acumen who did wonders in fighting for “the independence of the country” (Bârlădeanu 1997, cited in Pruteanu 1998). More recently, Dragomir (2014) lends considerable support to such a perspective by showing that the RWP elite constantly preferred to risk its domestic position by opposing the CMEA project, rather than engage with anything that it perceived “could infringe on the national independence” (Dej 1963, cited in Dragomir 2014, p.71)⁸⁶. This is, for example, how Dragomir (p.70) describes the perceptions of the ruling elite during the 5-8 March 1963 Plenum of the CC of the RWP: “The Politburo members emphasised that the CMEA integration threatened Romania’s national interests, her independence,

⁸⁶ “Some scholars – like Ungureanu or Miroiu – argue that in the early 1960s the Romanians’ declared concern with the state’s national interests was not genuine, but simulated. Others – like Tănase, Stanciu or Tismăneanu – contend that the Romanian- Soviet 1960s divergences were not about Romania’s sovereignty, independence or economic interests as the Romanian leaders claimed, that the Romanians’ sovereignty related arguments were merely propaganda. However, this study found that in the early 1960s the Romanian leaders were genuinely convinced that the Soviet leadership intended to infringe on Romania’s national sovereignty, independence or even territorial integrity and national identity” (Dragomir 2014, p.180).

sovereignty and territorial integrity. Even the state's 'national character' was in danger, they argued, since the other bloc members aimed to create an 'ideological, cultural integration', through the creation of 'some extraordinary things' such as 'the integration in the field of the school textbooks'." Moreover, by arguing that "Romanian opposition to the bloc specialization was formulated in different CMEA bodies as early as 1958 or 1959" (p.181) and that the RWP's "post-war grand strategy" of "bandwagoning" with the USSR (policy which had originated with support from the Romanian elites as a whole, and which was maintained almost throughout the Communist period) had been motivated by the perceived need to safeguard national independence, integrity and sovereignty in the face of an impending Russian threat (and not by ideology) (p.33), Dragomir (2014, p.35) indirectly points to the need to reconceptualize the role played by the idea and the ideology of the nation in the workings of the RWP and the RCP elite: "Publicly and officially, until the early 1960s, Romania acted both domestically and internationally as the most loyal satellite of the USSR. Behind the scenes, though, Gheorghiu-Dej, Maurer or Pauker criticised and tried to block the Soviet exploitation of Romania's resources, and attempted to limit the interference of the Soviet counsellors in Romania's domestic affairs, as early as 1947-1955."

Noticeably, one of the big research gaps the three theories above indirectly single out is that concerning the mentalities and belief-structures of Communist personalities and institutions⁸⁷. As mentioned before, it is highly likely that, for example, in terms of

⁸⁷ Paradoxically, this is also the area of research that has been most strongly developed in Romania, particularly through the writings of Vladimir Tismăneanu. However, Tismăneanu has been too quick to interpret the entire history of the RCP and all the big questions regarding the nature of the Communist regime and its policies through the psychological profile of its leading figures, assumed, strangely in all cases, to essentially mirror a Stalinist mindset reducible to one single feature: that of "resentment."

models of leadership, the national model had played an essential role alongside the Stalinist or Marxist/Leninist models in shaping the way in which Communist leaders would have come to understand their own role, actions and options, even as early as 1949, and not only after 1965 or 1980. After all, the “national faction” of Dej and Ceaușescu (Deletant 1998, p.62), had, from the very beginning, felt the imposition of a colonial like attitude and discourse from Moscow [this is very clearly emphasized by

“Devoid of any significant unorthodox temptation, isolated from the mainstream in the interwar years, and slavishly loyal to the Stalinist model,” Tismăneanu (2003, p.112) argues, “the political culture of Romanian communism expressed itself in extreme authoritarianism, bureaucratic centralism, worship of the party leadership, persecution of the handful of critical militants, conspiratorial factionalism, sclerotic dogmatism, persistent refusal to engage in theoretical debates, intolerance, exclusiveness, and unconditional loyalty to the world communist center, represented as ‘proletarian internationalism.’” Not surprisingly then, Dej manifested “the same desire to play little Stalin” like also “his chief ideologue” Leonte Răutu (p.135) because, despite not having studied at the Comintern’s school like the others, he had aptly developed a “Stalinism of instinct, not ideology.” What better description for him and his party than this, then: “Or perhaps one should rather say that Dej was a Stalinist Machiavellian who played a bloody game for power in a Byzantine sect of zealots” (p.99)? Not a surprise then, that Dej had promoted Ceaușescu because of seeing he “was the perfect embodiment of the Stalinist apparatchik” (p.176). And, of course, Ceaușescu was not to disappoint in Dej’s footsteps: “Nicolae Ceaușescu asserted himself as a master manipulator and outreached his Stalinist mentors in cynical astuteness and hypocrisy” (p.190). As for the turn to nationalism, Tismăneanu’s verdict is in line with the above and straightforward - the RCP was only fighting de-Stalinization by manipulating the national idea: “Worried by Krushev’s ‘second thaw,’ the Dejites try to resist de-Stalinization by devising a national strategy to entice the intelligentsia and bridge the gap between the party elite and the population” (p.168) and again “Breaking with hard-core Stalinism and rehabilitating national history were vital: in Romania, however, they were not the result of activities championed by critical intellectuals, but rather an opportunistic attempt on the part of the party elite to disguise its unwillingness to engage in real de-Stalinization” (p.151). Thus, what for Martin counts as an authentic first turn to nationalism in the 60s is revealed in Tismăneanu as only another brilliant manipulative scheme employed by Ceaușescu to achieve complete hold of power. Recently this position of Tismăneanu has been severely contested by Dragomir (2014, p.66): “While scholars often explain Romania’s opposition to the CMEA integration through the Romanian leaders’ goal of preserving their domestic power in the context of de-Stalinisation, the archival materials provide us with a different explanation. The Romanian leaders believed that their power positions would have been in fact secured had they agreed to the Soviet CMEA projects and that, on the contrary, their opposition would have jeopardised their domestic power positions, as the Soviet leaders might have decided to replace the opposing Romanian leadership with an obedient new team. As Bodnăraș put it, had Romania accepted integration, the state would have faced ‘the beginning of the abolishment of its sovereignty’, but ‘as much as our leadership is concerned I think that we will have plenty of time for hunting and other activities; we will become bailiffs’. Thus, a perceptual approach reveals that the Romanians opposed the USSR not because they feared that the Soviet leaders might have imposed a new leadership in Romania, but in spite of that fear.”

Tismăneanu (2003),⁸⁸ who views the resulting inferiority complex of the RCP and its leaders, and, in particular, the psychological feature of “resentment” as somehow responsible for all the major policy aspects and features of the Romanian Communist regime⁸⁹ – without, however, ever linking them to the potential development of a nationalistic outlook], and even as they proceeded with the elimination of Pătrășcanu - the only Communist leader arguing for a national path to Communism in Romania - they must have somehow empathized with the national idea as a form of resistance challenging the USSR (even if only from within an authoritarian Stalinist system). How else can we account for the fact that the Communist elite of 1964/65 identified itself with, indeed, defined its mission in terms of the perennial issue of national modernization, even while this was to be solved through a program of Stalinist industrialization, to the point of challenging the USSR in terms of its economic policy in 1964? As Crowther (1988, p.151) suggests: “From its inception the nationalistic element within the RCP elite was committed wholeheartedly to extensive industrialization as a teleological goal. While consistent with Soviet Marxism, this ideological preoccupation was just as much a part of the Romanian cultural heritage. Once Soviet designs for

⁸⁸ “Ceaușescu and his cult were in fact less of an aberration than they appeared to external observers. However, as Ken Jowitt has shown, Romanian communism could never fully overcome its pariah genealogy: during its years underground, the party elite had been made up primarily of allogenic elements (such as Bulgarian, Hungarian, Jewish, or Ukrainian Romanians) with little understanding of the country's national values and its people's aspirations. The party championed ideas and slogans with minimal appeal to the class it claimed to represent, portraying Romania as a "multinational imperialist country" and advocating the dismemberment of the Romanian nation-state brought into being by the Versailles and Trianon treaties of 1919-20. Its endorsement of Russian territorial claims on Bessarabia and northern Bukovina failed to stir a responsive chord in either Romania's urban proletariat or its radical intelligentsia (who were, in any case, overwhelmingly attracted by the extreme right). Lacking a mass base, dominated by foreigners, fractured, and pathetically impotent, the RCP was, moreover, treated contemptuously by the Comintern, further enhancing its pariah psychology- indeed, an excruciating inferiority complex on the part of its cadres. The anti-Soviet outbursts of Gheorghiu-Dej's last years and of Ceaușescu's twenty-four-year rule thus have to be seen in the context of the overall history of Romanian communism. In any other East-Central European communist party, it would have been much more difficult for a Ceaușescu to amass so much power” (Tismăneanu 2003, p.24)

⁸⁹ For this reason, that of benefiting from a more balanced account, I have chosen to rely in this chapter on the elite theory put forward by Tănase (1998) instead of that of Tismăneanu (2003).

southeastern Europe shifted from rapid industrialization to a plan for regional specialization that would have relegated Romania to the status of a perpetual ‘bread basket,’ it became apparent that the RCP leaders’ attachment to economic development emanated primarily from the latter source.” To conclude with, then, it might be that a more convincing explanation would have to account for the integration of all three viewpoints of Tănase, Verdery and Martin, in light, also, of other research available that is more specific in focus (such as Dragomir 2014).

Conclusion: Nationalism, the Turn to Nationalism and Socialist Humanism

Whatever the case, it can be assumed that the resultant opening allowed for the previously existent strong nationalistic discourse to partially advance its own claims, nevertheless in a context where it was being defused and appropriated as part of an evolving Communist discourse. While the nationalistic discourse was being expressed and also appropriated, the Communist Party (as well as different intellectual groups) also learned about its strategic uses, which can explain the differences in national emphasis at different times during the regime, or the different uses of the nationalistic discourse. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the national discourse at times forced the Communist Party onto its own terrain, by advancing claims regarding the nation that could not be ignored. Similarly, the Party also managed to restrict forms of the national discourse, when and where it deemed important, as it learned how to control the discourse. Despite this, it cannot be denied that starting with the 1980s a monolithic

form of nationalism had become as important as the Marxist-Leninism foundations of society and of Party rule, and as the humanistic discourse that connected both, marking the end-result of a very complex process of hybridization. Metaphorically, this hybridization is captured well through policies like the 1976 formation of the “The Fatherland’s Falcons:” with one side of the flag representing the nation and the other the red colour of the Communist Movement, but with their motto being “The Fatherland’s Falcons do a good deed every day!”

It is this hybridization, I wish to argue, that should form the focus of research, rather than just imagined clear-cut versions of Marxist or nationalistic discourses or policies. It is through this focus that I choose to position myself with regard to the conflict theories of Verdery and Martin: that of asking how discourses might have come together into one hybrid and shifting form, rather than just how they appeared, subverted or were subverted, disappeared and re-appeared as autonomous structures. Verdery is right to ask why at some point the national discourse had become so important and to ask at the expense of what discourse this has happened. Verdery is also right in observing the colonial vs. domestic discourse divide and in questioning what had happened to more authentic forms of Marxism, to Marxist notions and, generally, to the intellectual movement of the Left, in Communist Romania. Her analysis of national culture is absolutely essential in terms of explaining cultural politics within Romania during the Communist period, even if her emphasis is placed on continuity rather than difference. In a context in which intellectuals and political scientists have given much priority to the agency of the Party or the presumed psychology of its leaders, any attempt to build explanations based on structural and cultural factors can only be welcomed. However,

Martin is also justified in suggesting that the discourse of the nation did not subvert a Marxist discourse, firstly, because there was no such thing as a pure Marxist discourse at the time operating in the Communist systems, and secondly, because it did not succeed in displacing some form of it as essentially defining the Communist system (with its appropriations of nationalism), that form being associated with Marxist-Leninism and ‘the principle of Party leadership of all activities.’ Martin is also right in claiming that a nationalist discourse can have positive value, but also, in claiming that rather than subverting the foundations of a Communist discourse, the nationalist discourse was co-opted into it because it gave it added strength.⁹⁰ ‘The communization of nationalism’ is, therefore, a very worthy concept and expression, which could form the basis for new research. At the same time, it can be also ascertained that in some ways the exacerbated nationalist discourse was a main factor in the demise of Communism (see for example, the use of the national-hero archetype by protesters during the 1989 Revolution), however, not because such a discourse had weakened an existing discourse that could be mainly classified as Marxist. Last but not least, it is as fair to accuse Verdery of being neo-Marxist in her assumptions as it would be fair to consider Martin biased because of his affiliation with the anti-protocronist intellectual faction leaning towards humanism, liberalism and the West. It is easy to see that while Verdery looks at the nationalist discourse as a larger sociological structure stemming from the cultural field, Martin views it as a more specific cultural form engaging directly both the Party and the intellectuals. Because of the regulation of the status and practices of the intellectuals, the July theses are thus understood by Martin as a departure from the nationalistic discourse

⁹⁰ Essentially, the same opinion is voiced by Lucian Boia (2005, p.130): “In assuming ‘the cultural heritage,’ Communism had followed its own legitimization, even at the cost and, primarily, through the cost of deforming the authentic content of national culture.”

(which is assumed to be limited to that in which intellectuals functioned in the late 1960s), although the mini-cultural revolution could easily also be construed as deeply nationalistic in character and implications⁹¹. Last but not least, Martin seems to adopt the tendency so common among the former humanistic anti-protocronists siding with the West, that: 1) the explanation for structural events of the Communist period lies predominantly with the distorted/deficient/egocentric character of Ceaușescu and his effort at manipulation and control, and 2) that, ultimately, Communist systems, Stalinist and totalitarian, are the direct and only possible embodiment of Marxism. Moreover, despite the fact that he explicitly highlights the importance of humanism for one of the intellectual groups involved in the debate regarding the idea of the nation, Martin fails to acknowledge that humanism could also be seen as part of the nationalist discourse promoted by the Party, or generally, as an important part of the larger Communist discourse. Ultimately, both the arguments of Verdery and Martin single out the same questions: 1) What is the true nature of a Communist system and its main discourse/s, and, in particular, that of the Ceaușescu regime? 2) To the extent to which significant hybridization is taking place, what is the nature of that hybridization process and of its forms?

⁹¹ This makes for an interesting discussion. Martin (2002iii) sees the July Theses as marking a six-year interruption in the Communist Party's investment in the nationalistic discourse, from 1971 to 1977. In his opinion, Ceaușescu had reverted to a more Marxist-Leninist mode through the new model of the Maoist Cultural Revolution because the thesis of national unity had started developing uncontrollable consequences. Hence, the more stringent control on culture and the activity of intellectuals. With the crises of the year 1977 (the oil crisis, the devastating earthquake, the miners' uprising, Paul Goma's dissident movement, the formation of the first free syndicate – SLOMR), Ceaușescu came to realize that the cultural mini-revolution lacked support, and decided to play 'the national card' once again in order to consolidate his personal power. This contrasts heavily, for example, with interpretations like that of Lucian Boia (2005, p.132), who sees the July Theses as marking the shift to a more totalitarian and isolating regime which uses this closed space to propagate the message of unity around the Party through the ideology of nationalism.

It is to this problematic that I want to add the notion of socialist humanism. My suggestion so far has been to identify two main periods, with two main discourses, socialist realism and socialist humanism, where the second discourse is a hybrid form between discourses such as humanism, Marxism (or, rather, ‘Marxism-Leninism’) and nationalism (with other discursive influences present as well). Thus, the next part of the thesis will attempt to describe, in chronological order, the other important cultural discourses succeeding (or rather responding to and being framed by) ‘the turn to a national culture’ in this second period, with an aim at emphasizing, via their insertion of the hero-mirror mechanism, their hybrid and neglected socialist humanist character.

As for this section, my aim here has been to challenge the very common view that the period 1964/5 to 1989 should be viewed mainly as a period of excessive nationalism imposed by the Party, underneath which has survived, at all times, an authentic form of nationalism, both of which can be willingly or unwillingly recuperated in the post-communist period.⁹² As I hope to have proven, the question of what or who has triggered the turn to nationalism is far from resolved, while the assumption that some form of authentic and pure nationalism (and in fact, national culture as a whole) has escaped the hybridization process and the massive internal reconfigurations of Communism (as, also the assumption that nationalism has only played a passive/victim role in relation to the Communist Party) seems at best utopian. From this perspective, ‘the communization of the nation,’ as also the pressures to impose the category of the Nation on Communist discourse, did not result in “the distortion of the authentic repository of national culture”

⁹² “...the Communist period is interpreted as a traumatic interruption of an organic historical growth of the national identity in question. Communism is thus externalized, deinternationalized, and portrayed as the sum of the traumas to which a foreign power subjected one’s own identity, which now requires therapy so that said identity can become intact again” (Groys 2008, p.156).

(Boia 2005, p.130), but rather, into the complete hybridization and transformation of national culture into what we have today. Pure Romanian culture, if it ever existed, cannot be recuperated for, whatever it was, it has been forever inextricably linked with that of Communism⁹³. All that can be done from here is to assess this heritage and make something new of it. At the level of Romanian literature this has been achieved at a remarkable level by I.D. Sârbu (2004, pp.31-32):

“Even the historical past (full of valiant heroes and decapitated martyrs) had become new under the frenetic and optimistic avalanche of the last wave of rebirth and reconstruction. ...miraculous it seemed to me (...) this dialectical reconciliation, on the plane of the subconscious, of any contradiction between word and act, between reality and praise, between the dreamy-dream and its material basis. Here no one had insomnias because of the future, no one experienced remorse because of some wickedness, the values of culture and civilization, borrowed (not owned) because of reasons of opportunism and imitation, were so well wrapped in appearances and quotations, that the whole world could consider itself both quick-witted and damn good at stealing and being resourceful. A river of candour and indifference washed everything in poetry and patriotism.”

⁹³ “Beyond that—and this is, probably, the worst part of the story—the contemporary Western cultural markets, as well as contemporary cultural studies, require that the Russians, Ukrainians, and so on rediscover, redefine, and manifest their alleged cultural identity. They are required to demonstrate, for example, their specific Russianness or Ukrainess, which, as I have tried to show, these post-Communist subjects do not have and cannot have because even if such cultural identities ever really existed they were completely erased by the universalist Soviet social experiment. The uniqueness of Communism lies in the fact that it is the first modern civilization that has historically perished— with the exception, perhaps, of the short-lived Fascist regimes of the 1930s and ’40s” (Groys 2008, p.163).

CHAPTER 8

“Solar Lyricism” and the Recuperation of the “Inner Space” (or of the Inner Self)

Eight Reasons for the Appearance of Lyricism in the 1960s

More or less concomitant with the 1960s turn to nationalism occurs the gradual recuperation of aestheticism, particularly under the form of a certain type of lyricism later labeled by some as “Ceaușist orphism”⁹⁴ (Cernat 2004ii, p.381): “If the poetry of the 50s had been one epical-dogmatic, and that of the 80s would be one of ‘de-lyricism,’ the 60s generation is defined, essentially, through lyricism” (Cernat 2005, pp.227-228). If the poetry of the 1950s is concerned, before 1953 (the beginning of de-Stalinization), with epical heroes (martyrs of the Communist Cause or heroes in the field of work) and the cheerful motivation of class struggle and activism (including calls to violence), during the late 1950s, a more lyrical poetry “dedicated to the party, history, to the struggle for liberation and peace or to the pure sentiments of the Communist era” (p.227) gradually enters the scene. Why would the old, proletarian, Manichean, aggressive optimism, and the old, pedagogical, activist like folklore of the 50s suddenly give way to the “mythicizing, ritualistic and ceremonious, almost liturgical” new optimism, and to

⁹⁴ Orphism refers here to the themes, symbols and states related to the pre-Christian, pagan, naturist religious cults associated with practices of initiation, mysteries, magic, the duality of body and soul, pantheism and a concern with immortality: “The new orphism concerned the rediscovery, through song, of the archetypes of the community, the integration in the harmony, totality and cosmic immortality having as their center the new Cosmostrat” (Cernat 2004ii, p.385). Romanian Orphism has been associated with tracology or Dacia-mania, and has its roots in the poems of Lucian Blaga and the religious theories advanced by Mircea Eliade regarding the cultural roots of Romanians (idem).

the new naturalist, pantheistic, magical-incantatory form of neo-folklore (p.231) of the 60s?

One explanation sees this significant shift as the result of an essential change in the mechanisms of control advocated by the Communist Party. This is certainly confirmed by Lefter (2012, p.231) who sees the “atypical” recuperation of modernity in the 60s, or in his terms, the emergence of “neo-modernism” (1960-65 – 1980), as occasioned by the decision of the Communist party to put an end to the Proletkult experiment. Thus, while the years between 1949-1964 correspond to the annihilation of class-enemies or to the ‘leveling of society’ (and to social realism at the level of culture), the years after 1960 see the emergence of a more seductive and more subtle strategic mode of governance, concerned primarily with the ideological control of society⁹⁵ (i.e., social humanism, at the level of culture). From this perspective, the new lyricism marks the partial annexation of the opposition’s discourse through the recuperation of national ideology and aestheticism, and through that, the establishment of a kind of truce between the Party and the representatives of these traditions, namely the intellectual/political detainees of the interwar era (Cernat 2005, p.225). Here, the concern of the Party with attracting famous intellectuals in its own structures is best represented by the 1950s strenuous attempts by Dej to refashion the more aesthete poet Tudor Arghezi into the ‘national poet’ of the Communist regime, and also by the later rehabilitation of severely

⁹⁵ “By abandoning a mode of control based on material incentives and shifting to symbolic-ideological ones, the Ceaușescu leadership saved itself from the decentralization of power inherent in many technocratic reforms. Moreover, it increased the relative weight of humanist and cultural intellectuals over technical ones. That is, because there was no reform of the Romanian political economy, engineers, economists and enterprise managers lost some influence over the apparatus whereas historians, writers and philosophers – the linchpins of ideological and symbolic creation – gained relative to them” (Verdery 1991, p.107).

marginalized cultural figures such as the symbolist poet George Bacovia (1958), the philosopher-poet Lucian Blaga (1962) and the art critic Titu Maiorescu (1963) (idem).

The same problem, namely, that of an essential change in the conduct of the regime towards society, can also be looked at in another way. If the first stage, of the annihilation of society, can be viewed as a negation of a Hegelian kind, namely, as an anti-thesis, then the second stage can also be perceived as one of synthesis, where society is made to identify with the rule of the Party through the formation of a unifying, common ideology – which sees the nucleus of Communist ideology ready to engage and absorb elements of the national-cultural discourse: “Ceaușist Totalitarianism, lyrical and epical, conceived itself as a political alchemy, through which the lead of national tradition could be transformed into Communist gold” (Cernat 2004ii, p.385).

Another interpretation, however, credits the turn to nationalism as effectively opening the doors for a return to interwar cultural discourses, while at the same time positioning as national symbols and Romanian icons poets such as Mihai Eminescu. Moves such as these, the argument goes, had indirectly signaled the freedom to return to lyricism and forms of Romanticism. Or, to put it otherwise, faced with a period of relaxation in the sphere of culture, the new generation of poets/intellectuals were simply trying to continue from where Romanian poetry had left off during the interwar period. However, while a partial return to the Romantic lyricism of Eminescu and the orphic lyricism of Blaga etc. was allowed for, this implied a compromise that required the communization⁹⁶ of the national tradition: “We are not dealing so much with a poetry of

⁹⁶ For Cernat, these Orphic elements define not only the encomiastic poetry of the 60s, but in continuation, also the later rituals of the “Flacăra Cenacle” (“The Flame Cenacle”), that is, the late 70s attempt by the Ceaușescu regime to win the cultural battle with the West by creating a Communist state-led ‘hippie

the struggle, but with one of **becoming** [fulfillment], breathing through all its pores paradisiacal felicity, confidence in the permanence and glory of the nation – rescued through the Communism hypostasized by the absolute Leader” (Cernat 2004ii, p.382).

Yet another explanation views the traumatic feelings of relief associated with the partial liberalization of the cultural sphere in the 60s as generating the illusion of freedom for intellectuals and poets, and even feelings of gratitude. In fact, by “jubilantly evading from the socialist-realist psychosis into the delirium of the germinative-incantatory metaphors of hieratic purity and of patriotic fundamentalism” the poets from the 60s generation did indeed recover, even if just partially, an important space of creative freedom (Cernat 2005, p.230). For the first time, poets were allowed to be preoccupied with that which had formed an essential context to their formation, and which had been denied them for almost 15 years, that is, their notion of self, their feelings and emotions, their adolescence, their families, and the idea of the nation, together with forms of religiosity and mysticism. To this was added the freedom to express such themes in an aesthetical manner, arguably, without being suspected of creating decadent art. As Paul Cernat observes, “[t]he current themes of their poetry: childhood, adolescence, the parents (tradition), nature, and ‘the patriotic feeling’ are the resultants of the sublimation of a common biographical experience” (idem, pp.230-231), itself generated because of

counter-culture’. Moreover, these elements, namely “the oracle-like solemnity, the sacralizing grandiloquence, the attraction for ‘roots’, naturism, animism, festive, heroic and euphoric syncretism, the appetite for the grandiose and the sublime” (p.384) are essential in forming that type of “deviated, ‘synthetic’ religiosity” which feeds the personality cult of Nicolae Ceaușescu (and of the national poet Mihai Eminescu and of other historical figures Ceaușescu chooses to identify with) throughout the latter phases of his regime. For these reasons, Cernat (p.384) classifies the totalitarianism of the Ceaușescu regime as a “grotesque ‘Orphic totalitarianism.’” Continuing on the same line, Cernat (2005, p.232) ascertains that the personality cult of the Leader required “the cultic sacralization of Poetry” as placed in the service of “socialist patriotism,” and that this, in turn, led lyrical poetry to become “the magic Center of national identity and the propagandistic vehicle for the manipulation of collective emotions.” A very similar opinion can also be found in Dobrescu (2001, pp.148-152).

the post-traumatic decompression following the partial liberalization of the cultural sphere.

Furthermore, a similar type of psychological interpretation identifies a possible source for the lyricism of the 60s in the subconscious internalization of the Stalinist trauma. This argument relies on an observation made by art critic and psychoanalyst Charles Mauron. According to Mauron, 'the theme' of a poet is formed with the constitution of the 'orphic self,' and expresses the subconscious internalization of a trauma. Paul Cernat thinks this theory is applicable to the products of the 60s generation: "Hence 'the crying,' result of the torn candour, which, discovering the world, runs towards something that is 'much higher and much sooner'⁹⁷. On the other hand, the solemn use of the first person plural expresses the fear of individuation, the subconscious desire to fuse with the impersonal, collective energies, be they of nature, of the nation, of love or of the multitudes" (idem, p.241).

Another, more practical, explanation is offered by Dobrescu (2001, p.49), who sees the new poetry as resulting from two traditional phobias of the modernizing intellectual elite, one towards the party and its human emblems of totalitarianism, and the other, towards the uneducated masses: "To write pure, Orphic, self-reflexive poetry laden with alchemy, Kaballah or Hesychasm meant as much to absolve yourself for your participation in party meetings as to abstract yourself from the sea of proletarian vulgarity."

⁹⁷ This part reproduces a verse from Nichita Stănescu's well-known poem entitled "Cântec" ("Song"): "Take me happiness, on high, and hit/my temple into the stars, until /my world prolonged and never-ending/becomes a column or something else/much higher, and much sooner. "

Alternatively, Dobrescu (1998, p.211) also argues in a different place, the new type of poetry emerged as a reaction to the materialism and atheism of Communist ideology. Here, the officially sanctioned return to the poetic universe of Blaga made less risky and partly acceptable the presence of a diffuse mysticism with roots in underground poetry. Derived subconsciously from the inter-war Orthodox poetry that had continued in the Communist prisons during the 50s, this mystical orientation was considered attractive both because of its emphasis on the sacred and because it carried an aura of dissent and opposition to the party: “Heroism, meant, also to be mystical, to exalt revelation” (idem).

Finally, in an essay on Nichita Stănescu, largely considered the most significant poet of Romanian neo-modernism, Dobrescu (1998, pp.179-184) puts forward a third explanation. In a nutshell, Dobrescu sees the case of Nichita Stănescu as an example of how effectively counter-culture was being subsumed into the official culture by the regime. Stănescu, and here it is assumed the argument stands for other members of his generation, was in touch with Western forms of alternative culture and can be considered to have started his career as an ‘underground’ poet. His initial themes, like for example the motif of the sun, the call for liberty and even the reference to the long hair, mirrored those of Western hippie poets:

“The sun ascends from objects, crying,
shakes the borders, voiceless and grave.
My soul meets Him, Ave!

My horse rises on two shoes.

My pale mane burns on the wind.”⁹⁸ (Stănescu, cited in Dobrescu 1998, p.180)

Under immense and diverse pressures from the censors, critics and fellow artists in the literary field as well as from the public, Stănescu, however, moves away from the poetry of Western counter-culture and the emphasis (through a “language of intimacy”) on the self as individuality and finally assumes a form of philosophical and hermetical communication that refuses itself reference to the world and to a concrete self: “The indistinct self or the astral projections are preferred to the right of an own image, of an own persona” (Idem, pp.182-183).⁹⁹

Conclusion: “Solar Lyricism,” the Hero-Mirror Mechanism and Socialist Humanism

The mirror mechanism has been previously defined as ‘a device that operates a Communist-humanistic discourse which it adjusts in order to govern the possibilities of the mind to imagine reality,’ its mission being that of creating and regulating ‘positive avatars (heroes imbued with the best of humanity) for every social category.’ How does the lyricism of the 60s generation in poetry then, relate to this mechanism and to the wider discourse of socialist humanism?

⁹⁸ This translation of the poem ‘O călărire în zori’ (‘On horseback at dawn’) was provided by Thomas Carlson and Vasile Poenaru at http://www.romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii_tr/horseback.php

⁹⁹ In terms of the last explanation, the reader must be warned that Caius Dobrescu represents one of the important poets of the G80 generation, who as a general rule, are opposed to the highly abstract poetic modernism of the 60s in Romania, and also heavily influenced by the poetry of the American counter-culture movement.

Solar Lyricism as “Inner Space”

As suggested before, the socialist realism of the 1950s had produced an epic poetry that was celebratory and didactical, and whose aesthetical value paled against a dogmatic influence requiring, through “narrow and deforming models,” the “servile and artificial imitation of a reality ideologically cosmeticized” (Boldea 2004, ¶ 1). From this perspective, the partial recuperation of the criterion of aesthetical value from its ethical imperatives and the traumatic return to the self with its biographical themes was bound to lead to an “eulogizing poetry, expansive, jubilating, dreamy and euphoric, naturist-seraphic, orphic and mythicizing, like a balm of the present covering the wounds of the immediate past” (Cernat 2005, pp.227). Also a return to the poetry of the inter-war period, this exuberant lyricism could not avoid re-envisaging the poetic self as an “inner universe” of “authentic emotions” and “feelings” in which “themes such as love, death, time and history,” and, therefore, the totality of existence or the Absolute, were central (Boldea 2004, ¶ 1,3,5): “we are talking about an exuberant vitality, of Blagian origin [from Lucian Blaga], but also orphic, through which the lyrical self aspires at integration in the flux of elements, searching for the cosmic roots of its own being.” It is for these reasons, therefore, that this lyricism has been adequately described as “solar lyricism” (Cernat 2005, p.228).

This “inner universe,” this “rehabilitation of the self, of interiority, of feelings and of confessions” (Cernat 2005, p.231) gives us, then, the essential dimension through which the lyricism of the 1960s generation¹⁰⁰ is inserted both in the tradition of modernist

¹⁰⁰ The 1960s generation is ushered in by “poets such as A.E. Baconsky, Victor Felea, Aurel Rău, Aurel Gurghianu,” and particularly by Nicolae Labiş, and is represented by figures such as “Nichita Stănescu, Cezar Baltag, Ioan Alexandru, Marin Sorescu, Ana Blandiana, Ion Gheorghe etc” (Boldea 2004, ¶ 3-4).

poetry and, also, in the wider discursive space of the Communist regime: “This individual [the “individualized self” of modernist poetry] has a psychology, has inner states. Therein, in fact, lies the essential. The world exists on the outside, but it only has meaning to the extent to which it is lived, relived in the interior” (Muşina 2004ii, p.153). “The poetry of the 1960s generation” (Boldea 2004, ¶ 6) also confirms, “is based on the problematic of the self.”

“Inner space” and the 2nd Axis of the Mirror-Mechanism

At this point, the first part of the question concerning the existence of a relationship between “solar lyricism” and the mirror mechanism (as well as, socialist humanism) can be answered. Here, the term “solar lyricism” proves a very appropriate one, indicating the aspiration of this poetry to mirror the heart of the universe, the essence of reality. This, of course, corresponds to the second axis of the mirror-mechanism: ‘the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good.’ The same, however, can be said about the entire notion of ‘inner space,’ with its guiding values of sincerity, abnegation, candour, moral fervour etc., where Beauty is Good and the ultimate ideal, and where full becoming or achieving higher and higher states of being is the main aspiration. For, like in the case of Constantin Noica’s philosophy (see later chapter on ‘Noica’s School’), while a specific code of values is not made explicit, a Humanistic ethics exists, and one which demands nothing less than the interiorization of all values of humanity (seen not only as values but as states of being), in fact, of the entire cosmos: “A second dominant feature of the ’60 generation is the discovery of

living and uttering with an ethical subtext (but not at all moralizing, like before!)”
(Boldea 2004, ¶ 5).

One of the poems of Nichita Stănescu, “To Galatea,” can serve here as a useful example of the themes discussed so far:

“I know all your times, all your moves, all your perfumes
and your shadow, and your silences, and your breast
what shiver they have and what colour,
and your walk, and your melancholy, and your eyebrows,
and your blouse, and your ring, and the second
and I can't wait anymore and I put my knee in rocks
and I beg you,
give birth to me.

I know what's far from you,
so far, that close doesn't exist anymore-
afternoon, after the skyline, after the sea...
and everything that is after them,
and so far, that it doesn't have a name.
That's why I bend my knee and put it
on the rock's knee, which is humming.
And I beg you,
give birth to me.

I know everything that you never know, from inside you.
The heartbeat that follows the one you're hearing now,
the end of the word whose first syllable you're just saying
trees- wooden shadows of your veins,
rivers- moving shadows of your blood,
and rocks, the rocks- rock shadows of my knee,
which I bend in front of you and I beg you,
give birth to me. Give birth to me."¹⁰¹

The name Galatea refers to the myth of Pygmalion, in which a statue he had created and with which he had fallen in love is, upon his requests, finally instilled with the spirit of life by Aphrodite. Galatea represents, therefore, a symbol for the work of art. It is this myth, Ștefania Mincu (Stănescu 1987, p.27) argues, that Stănescu turns up-side-down in this poem: "attributing himself the condition of the 'unborn'...the artist invokes his work to create him as a living being, at the same time creating the world." We have here a clear expression of the sacralization of poetry or of the cult of Poetry. Also present is the orphic element with the self 'searching for the cosmic roots of its being' and for 'integration in the flux of elements'. Another part of Mincu's explanation of the poem is also noteworthy here. Mincu (p.28) remarks that the poem repeats a certain gesture of prostration, of the artist's "knee" touching "the rocks," several times. On the one hand, she explains, this "suggests the sacrifice of his heart, of his own body" (idem). And the trees and rivers are not living ones, for like the author, they are all "shadows," that is, virtual or unborn (p.29). The meaning of the poem becomes thus clear: "the work of art

¹⁰¹ Translation found at http://mihaela94.blogspot.co.uk/2010/04/to-galateea-catre-galateea-by-nichita_26.html

begets everything “trees, river, rocks – the surrounding world, only through the medium of the artist” (who knows everything and more about her and thus contains all the knowledge of the new world, but is only in a state of potentiality) who “offers himself as model to the world, humanizing it, sacrificing himself in order to make the rock resemble him” (the ‘rock’ becoming him as part of the reversed myth of Galatea in which the statue receives life) (idem). The aspiration of poetry to mirror the heart of the universe, the cult of Poetry, the notion of the self as an interior dimension or “inner space” which can become the entire Cosmos, the theme of sacrifice as union with the universe, the idea that the current self is an ‘unborn’ one that must be transcended, the idea that knowledge is like being ‘reborn’ in the right act of poetic creation, all these exemplify, it can be seen, the central themes discussed in this section as belonging to “solar” or “Orphic” lyricism.

“Inner space” and the 1st Axis of the Mirror-Mechanism

As already alluded in the poem above, the notion of “inner space” also confirms the first axis of the mirror mechanism: ‘the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself.’ For while the notion of “inner space” does not exclusively ask for “ceremonial sacrifice” (Mitchievici 2005, p.354), what it does ask for is pathos, authentic emotion, “sincerity, spontaneity, exultation, abnegation, candour, moral fervor, lived interiority” (Cernat 2005, p.231), in other words, a similar type of complete engagement (a sort of ‘full inner mobilization’), through which the self can integrate in the harmony and the totality of the cosmos. Of course, this imagery implies

the annihilation of self at some level, but the manner and extent of this are usually ascetic in nature, and not always reaching the final point of a ritual death.

While this does seem to be the case, the matter is, however, a lot more complicated than it seems. This is so because Romanian culture has been historically structured according to two central, but slightly different mythological tendencies, one linking the notion of “inner space” with that of a ‘ceremonial sacrifice’ and the other, linking it with the notion of a ‘ritual death.’ I am referring here to the two central myths of Romanian culture: that given by the pastoral ballad ‘Miorița’ (‘The Little Ewe’) and that contained in the ‘Legenda Meșterului Manole’ (‘Legend of Master Manole’).

In the first myth, one of three shepherds attending to their flocks together is made aware by an enchanted ewe that the other two are planning to assassinate him. Rather than opposing this plan, this shepherd decides to accept his death serenely, imagining his death as a sort of wedding integrating him into the cosmos:

“At my wedding, tell

How a bright star fell,

Sun and moon came down

To hold my bridal crown,

Firs and maple trees

Were my guests; my priests

Were the mountains high;

Fiddlers, birds that fly,

All birds of the sky;

Torch-lights, stars on high.” (Wikipedia, “Miorița”)

The “Miorița” myth, it is thus apparent, links that ‘lived interiority’ which seeks to integrate the self into the Cosmos, with a ‘ceremonial sacrifice’ assuming one’s peaceful resignation of his life.

In the second myth, Master Manole is commissioned with building the most beautiful monastery in the country, but despite countless attempts, its walls keep falling in. In a dream, he is told that for the construction to last, he must wall in someone very dear to either him or his other nine masons. Together, the builders agree that the first of their wives to arrive the next day will be the one sacrificed. Fate sees Master Manole having to wall in his own wife Ana together with her unborn child (he does so via the pretense of a game). Through this “ritual of death” the monastery¹⁰² is finally built, but for fear of them not building something even greater later, the king has the builders stranded on the roof. In the end, the builders attempt to fly off with wooden wings but only manage to plunge to their death. Essentially, at the place where Master Manole dies, a spring is formed which runs through the stone of the Monastery.

Certainly, the “inner space” of the 1960s lyrical generation does not explicitly involve this notion of ‘ritual death.’ However, the Eliade (2004, “‘En-livening’ an ‘architectonic’ body,” para. 1-5) interpretation, that through “violent death,” a “creative sacrifice” is able to secure the lasting foundation of a future edifice, also gives the myth

¹⁰² Identified in the ballad as the “Curtea de Argeș Monastery” of today.

an essential cosmic dimension: “If, as a considerable number of archaic traditions reveal, any violent death is creative, that is, it projects the soul of the one who was sacrificed into a new body, it goes without saying that the soul of the one ritually sacrificed at the foundation of a building is projected in his new architectonic body, which, by ‘enlivening’ it, it makes long-lasting. Hence, regarding the Romanian legend, Master Manole’s wife lives inside the monastery, in the sense that the monastery itself makes up her body. So, had the Master died a natural death, he wouldn’t have been able to meet her for the mere reason that she wasn’t dead. What is admirable in the Romanian ballad is the intuition of the author or of the authors who, for reuniting the two spouses, worked out the only possibility of them meeting: the violent death of the Master. Indeed, this death, which – altered as it might seem in the ballad as to its meaning – is still a ritual death, **prolongs Manole’s existence on the same cosmic level that his wife continues hers; she – with an architectonic body; he – with the body of a running water [my emphasis]**. Their bodies are close, for the spring is:

‘With clear water

Running through stone,

With salty tears,

By Caplea shed.’

The ‘stone’ is the new body of the wife. **Their embrace is now fulfilled on another cosmic level [my emphasis]**, where the circuit is slower, so slow that, to the human eye, it seems like eternity.”

From the Eliade (2004) perspective, then, it can be said that the “Legend of Master Manole” links that “inner space” which aims for integration of the self into the Cosmos, with a “ritual of death” implying the violent death of another person, in this case, one most dear to that self.

Both the “Miorița” and the “Manole” myths, it can thus be concluded, effectively link the notion of “inner space,” and its theme of integration into the cosmos, with the need for total sacrifice (the slight difference is between self-sacrifice and sacrifice of a dear one). In that sense, and because these two myths are central to Romanian culture and poetry, the notion of “inner space” can be seen to fully confirm, at least as a dominant predisposition, ‘the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater than himself.’

Moreover, such a predisposition has already been confirmed at the historical level, in a moment prior to the 1960s lyrical generation and which is, also, of great importance to its poetic roots. This moment is exemplified by the Legionary movement and its poetry, which “marginalized Miorița and exalted the Legend of the Master Manole instead” (Oișteanu 2002), transforming its theme of ‘creative sacrifice’ into “a true mysticism of death in the service of the nation” (Petreu 1999, cited in idem): “How beautiful appears this meaning of the founding-death ... in the ballad of the Monastery on the Argeș! How all-encompassing its teaching! If you do not kill what you have as most dear, most good, most precious, if the weaklings and not the heroes die, if your sacrifice is not

consummated, like the sacrifice of Manole's wife, in a mute, a tragic tension, you will build nothing solid. Let us learn how to die!" (Dan Botta 1936, cited in idem).¹⁰³

"Inner space" and Socialist Humanism

Having discussed how "solar lyricism" confirms, via the notion of "inner space," both axes of the mirror-mechanism, attention can now be given to the role played by this aesthetical discourse in the wider discourse of socialist humanism.

As Muşina (2004ii, p.153) observes, this "inner space" or "the individualized self" only exists through reading, through it being assumed by the reader. The main function of this lyrical poetry (also, a modernist one) is then, "to balance, to harmonize, to give a sense to the interior" (p.154) by "exploring **the inner space**, shaping the way in which man relates to the world, but also the way he communicates with others" [my emphasis] (p.159). Through the mirror-mechanism, it can thus be concluded, the solar lyricism of the 1960s attempts nothing else but the inner development of the reader's self, the formation of a new self, and one which engages with his own self-development according to certain humanistic ideals.

However, this occurs in the context of the emergence of a wider socialist-humanist project, that of post-Stalinist Communism, also attempting the reconstruction of the "inner spaces" of citizens according to similar humanistic ideals of self-development.

Considering the political weight of each of these discourses, it is clear that one was

¹⁰³ On this point, the words of the Iron Guard founder and leader, and the historical reality they helped generate, are most edifying: "The legionary loves death, because his blood will serve to mould the cement of Legionary Romania" (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu 1933, cited in idem).

bound to try to exploit and annex the other from the very beginning: “In the epoch in which the political elite aims to demarcate itself from the sombre episode of Stalinism and to unite around a new political project that is more liberal, this type of ‘**solar lyricism**’ seems to correspond to its intentions” [my emphasis] (Macrea-Toma 2009, p.305). Reason that, it should be added, explains, even if only partially, the dominant position which the 1960s generation had come to occupy in the intellectual field until the very end of the Communism period (idem, pp.107-123).

From this perspective, then, it can be said that the “cultivation of self” (Foucault 1988) envisaged by the lyricism of the 1960s generation provided the project of ‘the formation of the new man’ with an even stronger avenue into “the inner selves” or the “inner spaces” of its citizens (thus, providing an important degree of legitimization for the regime). Of course, such an assertion does not seek to neglect or to minimize the fact that some tendency for “moral exigency” or a “radicalization of discourse” towards “recording any deviation from normality, from ontological and ethical ordinariness” did exist in the lyricism of the 1960s, and particularly in that of the 1970s generation¹⁰⁴ (Boldea 2004, ¶ 7, 11). However, even in such a case, it must be acknowledged, the ‘recording of the deviations from normality’ would have been issued from a perspective about the “inner space” (and about the ideal “humanistic values”) also shared by the Communist party official discourse. Moreover, it is exactly this emphasis on the notion of “inner space,” which the 1960s generation establishes as dominant, that sees the possibility of political or cultural resistance in the intellectual field (and not only) being

¹⁰⁴ This is referred to by Boldea (2004, ¶ 11) as comprising the following poets: “Mircea Ciobanu, Mircea Dinescu, Emil Brumaru, Șerban Foarță, Ileana Mălăncioiu, Cezar Ivănescu, Dan Laurențiu, Virgil Mazilescu, Ion Mircea, Adrian Popescu, Dorin Tudoran, Daniel Turcea, Mihai Ursachi etc.”

gradually reduced to a 'passive resistance' defined as 'the autonomy of the aesthetic': "The members of the '60 generation affirm themselves as the continuators of a literary trend preoccupied with pure emotion and uninterested in social reflections" (Macrea-Toma 2009, p.304). A similar opinion is added by Dobrescu (2001, p.151): "in a world governed by Evil, public acts and attitudes lose all of their relevance, 'exterior' freedom is in objective manner lacking sense, only the 'interior' one counts." Dobrescu (idem) puts forward an interesting hypothesis in remarking that the 60s emphasis on "purity and truth" had an early dimension which combined artistic with civil freedoms (particularly in the 'Onirism' of Dumitru Țepeneag and the later protest letters of Paul Goma), but that this subsided in a period which, also through the 'solar or Orphic lyricism', saw the entire artistic Generation of the 60s somehow induced to establish the distinction between the ethical (ideological) and the aesthetic as the key artistic principle of the entire period of socialist humanism (i.e., the principle of the 'autonomy of the aesthetic'): "As a general phenomenon, 'the poetic of opposition' inaugurated in 1960s met a continuous slide, deviation, glissade, at times slower, at times faster, from moral purism towards aesthetic purism." Not only this, Dobrescu (1998, p.204) argues, but after 1989, such "fighters for the cause of the poetic purity of 'being'" have managed to aestheticize even the meaning of actual 'resistance' against Communism. Using the example of Ana Blandiana, a famous G60 poet with a poetics that emphasized pantheism but who had also temporarily lost the right of signature because of several poems¹⁰⁵ which subtly criticized the reality of everyday life in Communism, Dobrescu

¹⁰⁵ See for example, her 1984 poem 'Everything':
"... Leaves, words, tears
Tinned Food, Cats
Trams from time to time, queues for flour

(pp.202-203) shows that, during post-communism, a certain heroic aura had been transferred to her from one of the real figures of resistance, Elisabeta Rîzea. This “interpretation of militant anti-Communism through the ‘cult of Culture,’” Dobrescu (pp.204-206) thus concludes, is dangerous in that it emphasizes a spiritualizing orientation at the expense of the political, thus leading to the degradation of civic virtues. Real resistance, he warns, is not the same as ‘cultural resistance’ (idem).

Ultimately, the importance of “solar lyricism” to the mirror-mechanism of the socialist humanist period and discourse is underlined by the indirect but essential support given to the other cultural discourses analyzed or mentioned in the remaining chapters of this body of work, which succeed it.

The almost exclusive importance given to the “inner space,” to the “inner self” which must develop from within inside himself, through exploration of his own being, (and thus, indirectly, the abstraction or separation from everyday social reality) finds itself expanded, within protochronism, from the level of the individual to the level of the

Weevils, empty bottles, speeches
Elongated images on the television
Colorado beetles, petrol
Pennants, the European Cup
Trucks with gas cylinders, familiar portraits
Export-reject apples
Newspapers, loaves of bread
Blended oil, carnations
Receptions at the airport
Cico-cola, balloons
Bucharest salami, diet yoghurt
Gypsy women with Kents, Crevedia Eggs
Rumours
The Saturday serial, coffee substitutes
The struggle of nations for peace, choirs
Production by the hectare
Gerovital, the Victoriei Avenue Mob
The Hymn of Romania, Adidas shoes
Bulgarian stewed fruit, jokes, sea fish
Everything.” (Translation found at <http://www.beyondtheforest.com/Romania/RSR4.html>)

nation. As discussed in the next section, protochronism demands “the assertion of a self-sufficient culture, which must define its values after its own criteria, without consideration for the criteria and values from outside” (Martin 2002ii, Protocronism vs. modernitate, para. 2). Furthermore, in this case, “the inner space” of the nation, namely, its internal culture, holds in exclusive manner, both as tradition and as a potentiality, the key not only to the autarkic self-development of its nation-state, but also, to the spiritual regeneration of the whole West. Where “solar lyricism” had been concerned with ‘cultivating the self,’ protochronism is, thus, concerned with cultivating the soul of a nation from which a majestic culture emerges. Thus, while “solar lyricism” contributes its fair share of “ethnic mysticism” (Cernat 2004ii, p.383) to that asserted by protochronism, essentially, through the emphasis on “inner space,” its efforts combine with those of protochronism in ensuring that Communist society “is a concrete society functioning in the register of the imaginary” (Boia 1999, p.220).

As for the “Noica School,” and this has already been touched upon, “solar lyricism” has in common with it three main features, which, in everyday discourse, tend to reinforce each other.

The first feature reveals an implied Humanistic ethics, which, instead of promoting a specific code of values, demands nothing less than the ‘interiorization’ of all the values of humanity.

The second features emphasizes the essential role given to the idea of personal becoming, seen as implying a form of cosmic unification with the totality of reality and described, philosophically, as the union between the Determinations of the Individual

and the Determinations of Being (see the ‘Noica School’ chapter): “In truth, what is it that I wanted all throughout my life? And I will answer: I wanted what anyone wanted and all I did was to say what we all want, maybe without knowing. I wanted to embrace him who embraces me, to embrace the encompassing that encompasses me.... Such an aspiration towards totality manifests itself as a tendency to incorporate the medium, to absorb it in yourself: I call it the passing of the external medium into the internal medium....The passing of the external medium into the internal medium is, it would seem, exactly the entrance into the condition of <to be>” (Noica, cited in Liiceanu 1983, pp.90-91).

Last but not least, the third feature consists of a similar pedagogical desire, and in fact, project, to cultivate the self through the medium of culture.

In truth, however, what ultimately renders the “solar lyricism” of the 1960s generation similar to the “Noica School” project, is their shared emphasis on the notion of “inner space,” on the soul’s rise to the status of universal spirit through transformation of his own internal medium, namely, on “an interior dimension” that seeks to contain the entirety of humanity, “the infinite inside the finite” (Noica cited in Liiceanu 1983, p.92): “Why is Jesus called <Son of Man> and not <Son of God>? Precisely because he has made from humanity, from the entire humanity, his internal medium. And divinity is the sense of this totality that has become an interior dimension” (idem).

As for the Flacăra Cenacle, by turning the Orphism of the 60s lyricist generation into magical-ritualistic sessions in which “elite poetry” was mixed with folk/hippie music and official propaganda, this series of festivals effectively transformed “solar lyricism”

into a mass-based phenomenon. Moreover, through the Flacăra Cenacle, the “inner space” of the lyrical self was transformed into a ‘collective inner space,’ where a form of collective “aesthetical self-fictionalization” (Poenaru 2010) could take place, combining an aesthetical escape and the illusion of freedom with a form of entertainment laced with propaganda. In this sense, it is impossible to understand the impact of “solar lyricism” as cultural discourse, without looking at the Flacăra Cenacle.

From the lyricism of the 1960s generation, an element of “ethnic mysticism” and the theme of spiritual rejuvenation, particularly in Christian terms, feature strongly in the discourse of the “New Right” movement (which sees itself as a continuation, in the years 2000, of the Legionary movement). Incorporating protochronist features after 1989, the “New Right” emphasizes, in a manner reminiscent of the notion of “inner space” and the ‘cultivation of self’ of ‘solar lyricism,’ a “process of interior Christianization” through which the qualities of a “new man,” of a “hero in the service of the nation” can be developed (Noua Dreaptă 2008, ¶ 3).

With regard to the Păltiniș group, the notion of “inner space” or “solar lyricism” fits right in with the central category of “inner utopia” which Șerban (2010) employs so as to describe this intellectual grouping. In short, the notion of “inner utopia” originates with the Platonic idea that knowing oneself should form the basis of political organization, and envisages political change or political models as fundamentally requiring an existential change in the inner selves of the people, of the masses, of each individual. Therefore, the category of “inner utopia” is directly opposed to the notion of representative democracy, in which “the sphere of politics stops at the limit of the private spaces of the citizens” (Șerban 2010, p.132). Whereas representative democracy

emphasizes the role of procedure, formal institutions and political doctrines, “inner utopia” highlights, instead, “the search for self-consciousness,” “myths, symbols and rituals” and the dominant role of beliefs and existential experiences (idem, p.139). However, this notion of “inner utopia” (also referred to as “inner justice,” “interior republic”, “utopia of the self,” and “the utopia of inner conscience”) can prove dangerous inasmuch as its transformation into “an aim of political action” can justify extension of absolute power to an elite minority (as is the case with Plato’s ‘Republic’) (p.131). Moreover, as Şerban (p.144) warns in his conclusion, “the political language” associated with the Western tradition of political thought and with modernization, has been, since the dawn of the Romanian nation, constantly undermined by “an interpretative language” favouring the terms of an “inner utopia” and the return to an autochthonous model. To what should the lack of dissidence, or of an organized opposition to communism in Romania, be attributed, Şerban (p.142) asks, if not to the fact that “as also during the interwar years, the central preoccupation of intellectual engagements with politics has been one of interior nature, of confrontation with their own dubitative conscience”? Moreover, he continues, has not the same notion of ‘inner utopia’ been responsible, during post-communism, for the choice of the intellectuals to develop “an anti-communist pathos” instead of a critical analysis of political discourses and a survey of the political strategies available (p.143)? Has it not been reflected in the dominant belief of the ‘anti-communist’ intellectuals that “public discourse alone” can alter “the general course of events” (p.141) and in “the confiscation,” by the same intellectuals, “of the exclusivity of ‘moral conscience...in the orientation of the governing act’” (idem)?

Although directly challenging the “modernist abstraction and objectivity” of “solar lyricism” through “an unlimited subjectivity, marked by the colloquial,” in other words, by a “(micro)realist and biographical” orientation (Cărtărescu 1999, pp.151, 153), the G80 (or the Generation of the 1980s) poets would, nevertheless, retain the ideal of sincerity of the 1960s generation, and in some cases and despite their postmodernist orientation, a strong Humanistic orientation.

Moreover, the same “poetics of sincerity” (Cernat 2005, p.231) will continue to feature in the 1998 “Fracturist Manifesto,” poetic program with which important poets of the 1990s generation were identified at one point, and which declared a radical break with the postmodernism of the G80.

Last but not least, it can be considered that the Romanian New Wave of cinema, despite its neorealist style, also features the notion of “inner space,” however, not as one of becoming (like in the “solar lyricism” tradition) but as a ghostly one, in need of elucidation/recuperation.

CHAPTER 9

Protochronism

Defining Protochronism

Launched in 1974 by the comparatist Edgar Papu, protochronism, it is generally agreed, originated¹⁰⁶ as a concept in literary theory. The term, derived from Greek (“protos” = first and “chronos” = time) referred, in Papu’s designation, to the notion of ‘priority’ or ‘precedence’ in cultural discovery. “This idea,” as Verdery (1991, p.167) observed, “encouraged critics and literary historians to look for developments in Romanian culture that had anticipated events in the better-publicized cultures of Western Europe.” As such, the concept, reminiscent of attempts made earlier by Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu and Nicolae Densușianu to establish the Dacians as an important reference point for national identity and as foundational to European culture (tendency identified as ‘dacomania’¹⁰⁷, or ‘thracomania’ by its critics and ‘dacology’ by its

¹⁰⁶ As it stands, however, the origin of this ‘idea’ has been the subject of much debate. In 1977, the critic Nicolae Manolescu and literary historian Ovidiu S. Crohmălniceanu protested that the term and theory around it were “constructed in obvious contradiction to the theory of synchronism launched by the literary historian Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943) in the 1920s” (Maier 1977, p.3). More recently, Verdery (1991, p.343) has stated that, according to a source at the magazine “Secolul 20,” the article giving birth to protochronism had been commanded from above. Whatever the case, as Tomiță (2007, p.15) has observed, the notion would probably have passed un-noticed without the existing political context, which encouraged the development of ‘indigenism’.

¹⁰⁷ “Usually glossing over the fact that Dacian society lacked such basic instruments as a writing system, protochronists attempt to prove either that Dacians had a major part to play in Ancient history, or even that they had the ascendancy over all cultures (*with a particular accent on Ancient Rome, which, in a complete reversal of the founding myth, would have been created by Dacian migrants*). Also noted are the exploitation of the Tărtăria tablets as certain proof that writing originated on proto-Dacian territory, and the belief that the enigmatic Dacian language survived all the way to the Middle-Ages. An additional - but not universal - feature is the attempted connection between the supposed monotheism of the mysterious Zalmoxis cult and Christianity, in the belief that Dacians easily adopted and subsequently influenced the religion which would have been preached to them by Saint Andrew (considered, doubtfully, as the clear origin of modern-day Romanian Orthodoxy)” (Wikipedia, “Protochronism”).

advocates) (Wikipedia¹⁰⁸, “Protochronism”), established the priority of certain major cultural discoveries with Romanian figures, although without claiming that these had actually influenced their appearance in the West. In this, Papu himself led the way by employing the term so as to identify a number of “Romanian literary firsts”: “he sees the 15th century *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab catre Fiul sau Teodosie* (The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Teodosie) as anticipating European baroque literature, presents Dimitrie Cantemir as a romantic writer *avant la lettre*, regards Eliade Rădulescu as anticipating 20th century emphasis on psychoanalysis, Costache Negruzzi an earlier but superior Flaubert, Alecsandri a pre-symbolist, and Eminescu an ancestor of existentialism, etc.” (Maier 1977, p.2).

Starting from this foundation, the meaning of protochronism soon extended beyond that of a simple notion. While initially describing an essential trait of Romanian literature in the universal context (Papu, according to *idem*), the concept quickly developed into a “new critical method” (Tomiță 2007, p.60) and a “‘basic’ theory” (Maier 1977, p.1) concerned “with Romanians’ self-image and with the relation of Romanian values to the rest of the world” (Verdery 1991, p.176). This was likely the result of an unforeseen chain reaction in which protochronism triggered a revival of certain inter-war arguments about Romania’s engagement with modernity that resulted in a new dimension for the concept itself.

¹⁰⁸ The reader would have observed the use of materials belonging to the Wikipedia online encyclopedia and to sites such as “Youtube”. Due to the lack of resources on certain of the themes discussed, this has been considered, at times, a necessity. It is interesting to note that Alexandra Tomiță, in her monograph on protochronism, also relies on articles from Wikipedia (2007, p.19). Whenever used herein, such resources have been checked in light of other documents, and not used as single sources in the presentation of any main argument.

Verdery (1991, pp.46-52) describes the inter-war discursive space about the nation as being distributed between three different ideal groups: the “Westernizers,” the “Indigenists” and the “Orthodoxists.” In this scheme, the protochronists, with their emphasis on the autochthonous, on national essence and the strategy of autarchy, fall within the “Indigenist” category. This is not simply because of some similarity in features, but because of how protochronism chooses to position itself in relation to the dominant cultural orientation of its time. In order to illustrate this argument, a brief outline of cultural history is needed.

In the interwar period, the “Indigenist” orientation spanned a multitude of ideological discourses, from the Junimist¹⁰⁹ theory of “Forms without Substance”¹¹⁰, to

¹⁰⁹ “Junimism” is one of the most important “ideological and cultural movements” in Romania, synonymous, in the second half of the 19th century, with “the critical conscience of national identity and a program for reconstruction of cultural identity within modern coordinates” (Georgiu 2002, p.124).

“‘Junimea’ was a Romanian literary society founded in Iași in 1863, through the initiative of several foreign-educated personalities led by Titu Maiorescu, Petre P. Carp, Vasile Pogor, Theodor Rosetti and Jacob Negruzzi. The foremost personality and mentor of the society was Maiorescu” (Wikipedia, “Junimea”).

¹¹⁰ Maiorescu first outlined the theory of ‘forms without substance’ in 1868. Its immediate context was that of two major transformations: 1) the formation of the modern institutional structure for the Romanian state, particularly during the reign of Cuza (1859-1866) – this period saw, amongst others, the modernization of the educational system and the establishment of the Universities of Iași (1860) and București (1864) and, also, of the Romanian Academy (1866) (Georgiu 2002, pp.118-119) 2) the transition, governed in great extent by the Junimists, from the cultural model of the 1848 Romanian intellectuals – based on the Romantic notion of the cultural hero as an encyclopedic intellectual and a national prophet undertaking titanic tasks for the construction of the nation, to a cultural model more and more in favor of ‘the specialists’ and of critical thinking that could more realistically evaluate and direct the modernization process. It is in this context that Maiorescu (1868, p.134) argues against the discrepancy between the new democratic institutions and the real state of the country (between ‘the legal country,’ and ‘the real country’) (Georgiu 2002, p.117): “In appearance, according to the statistics of external forms, Romanians possess today almost the entire civilization of the Occident. We have politics and science, we have journals and academies, we have schools and literature, we have museums, conservatories, we have theatre, we even have a constitution. But in reality all these are dead productions, pretensions without a foundation, ghosts without a body, illusions without truth, and in this way, the culture of the higher classes of Romanians are null and without value, and the abyss which separates us from the lower [-class] people becomes day by day deeper.” To Maiorescu, such ‘forms without substance’ are simply destructive of the cultural and social development of the nation. This is so because Maiorescu espouses a model of organic growth, in which cultural forms can only develop out of the inner substance of their culture [equivalent also with the social classes corresponding to a society (Drăgulin 2010, ¶7)]. To create forms that lack cultural substance is to delay and sap at the process of the constitution of that substance in the future, and

Sămănătorism¹¹¹, Popularism¹¹², Țărănism,¹¹³ and even Gândirism¹¹⁴ and Trăirism.¹¹⁵

The “Indigenist” character is apparent in that, despite their different emphases on the national essence, the autochthonous, the rural masses, tradition and folklore, these

to discredit the existing forms. The imposition of ‘forms without substance,’ therefore, can only lead to the creation of a “false culture,” one living in “untruth” (Măiorescu 1868, p.136).

¹¹¹ Developed around the literary and political magazine “Semănătorul” (“The Sower”) (1901-1910) and the figure of historian Nicolae Iorga, this traditionalist ideological/cultural current consisted of several key ideas. Firstly, that the development of nations required a form of organic growth through which social change could be circumscribed within the coordinates of “slowly deposited and codified” tradition (Georgiu 2002, p.188). Secondly, that the organic evolution of 19th century Romanian society had been severely disturbed by the separation of the elites from the masses, manifested in the elite’s adoption and import of superficial (consumerist) forms of foreign, Western culture (idem, pp.189-190). Thirdly, that in order to return to organic growth, the “restoration of a national culture” based on the “recuperation of tradition and of the values deposited in the rural world” was needed (idem). Finally, that the answers to both the agrarian problem and modernization as well as to the “lost unity of Romanian society” were, thus, primarily cultural (as opposed to political or economical) in nature, with literature playing almost a messianic role (p.190).

¹¹² “Popularism” (or Romanian Populism), is a multifaceted and complex ideological current of partial Narodnik inspiration founded in 1890 by Constantin Stere. Because of advocating the peasant structures as the essential reservoir of a national culture that could elevate the nation, Popularism falls in the family of traditionalist ideologies such as those of Junimea and Sămănătorism. Nevertheless, the cultural current departs from these movements in appreciating the influence of the Occident as positive, and in seeking a middle ground between “aestheticism” (and European modern art) and a useful art that is both national and aware of its social background (Georgiu 2002, pp.213-214). Through its rejection of the viability of the Communist social-economic model for Romania and through its political demands for an agrarian reform, for a universal voting system, and for a model of economic development that emphasizes the modernization of agriculture over that of industry (because of the social character of the Romanian nation and its technological backwardness) Popularism forms a complex political doctrine of the center (idem, p.198).

¹¹³ Like Popularism, the inter-war ideological current of Țărănism focuses on the rural population, in addition advocating the maintenance of the agricultural structures and modes of organization and production (against capitalist like reform or interventions), identified as the most authentic forms of Romanian life (Wikipedia, “Țărănism”).

¹¹⁴ Formed around the magazine “Gândirea” at the beginning of the XXth century, this current was in many ways similar to Sămănătorism, however, with a strong emphasis on Orthodox Christianity which, in politics, translated into support of the extreme Right among its followers (Georgiu 2002, p.299): “Its orientation is towards Orthodoxism and the autochthonous, promulgating traditionalism, nationalism and national unity under the auspices of the Orthodox Church” (Wikipedia, “Gândirism”).

¹¹⁵ “Trăirismul (the Romanian version of the German notion of Lebensphilosophie) is an inter-war philosophical current that had as founder and main figure the Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu” (Wikipedia, “Trăirism”). Based on “the primacy of ‘living’ over the intellect” this current drew on philosophers such as “Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Spengler, Bergson, Soloviov, Berdiaev etc.” to position mystical attitude as more important than intellectual or analytical concerns (idem). Although the current allowed for different positions and paradigms, Nae Ionescu saw the fulfillment of Romanian philosophy based on a combination (characteristic of Eastern European societies in his view) between mysticism and authoritarianism (idem). Important inter-war Romanian intellectuals such as Mircea Vulcănescu, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, Petru Comarnescu and even Mihail Sebastian are considered to have been disciples of Nae Ionescu. The relation between these figures (with the exception of Sebastian and Comarnescu) or Trăirism as a philosophical current, and the Legionary ideology/movement, has been, and still is, the subject of much debate (Petreu 2003, Călinescu 2001).

ideological currents viewed Western-type modernization at the turn of the 20th century in similar manner: as endangering the living soul of Romanian culture, the formation of the Romanian nation and, effectively, the everyday life of the common Romanian people (largely identified with the peasantry). With Romanian liberalism having played an important role in the formation, modernization and governance of the Romanian nation since 1848, and with the National Liberal Party governing almost uninterrupted between 1867 and 1937, the attempts at Western like modernization ushered in by the Liberals constituted the butt of all “Indigenist” discourses. However, while their combined line of attack was framed through the 1868 sociological theory of “Forms without substance,” the Liberal line of defense had its own sociological response in Lovinescu’s 1924-25 theory of “Synchronism”.

To the critique of the imposition of Western models as foreign forms that did not correspond to the mentalities, levels of culture and creativity of the Romanian people, Lovinescu opposed the argument that, since the first half of the XIX century, the introduction of Western capitalism had been the main force behind Romania’s modernization. The continuation of modernization, Lovinescu further asserted, demanded the ‘synchronization’ of Romania with the West, through mass adoption of those Western institutions, practices and ethics that reflected “the spirit of the time” (Georgiu 2002, p.288). As for the theory of “Forms without Substance,” even though the process of synchronization had started, arguably, with such forms, the problem was simply one of gradual development or evolution. In time, such forms would eventually develop substance and the law of imitation or synchronization would prove its worth. It seemed a revolutionary step, but, as a backward society, Romania was never going to

catch up with the rest of Europe simply by continuing on its own ‘organic’ path of development (idem, pp.289-290). Overall, the phenomenon of ‘forms without substance’ was, thus, not a destructive but a creative one.

Lovinescu died in 1943 and later disappeared, together with most other national figures, from the literary canon of Romanian socialist realism. However, his late 60s “rehabilitation” (Macrea-Toma 2009, p.308) was essential in spurring a new generation of intellectuals to demand the return to a national culture inclusive of its European and humanistic dimensions (Martin 2002ii, 2002iv). As these modernist intellectuals continued to grow in stature in the 70s, Lovinescu’s theory also grew in importance.

Thus, when Edgar Papu fashioned the concept of protochronism in 1974, he did so out of engagement with Lovinescu’s theory of synchronism (Martin 2002ii, *Apariția protocronismului sau protocronismul ca atitudine culturală*, para. 2; Maier 1977, p.3). By affirming the originality of Romanian literature and its priority in relation to Western literature, Papu challenged the widespread intellectual tendency to read Romanian literature as marginal and backward when compared with that of the West: “There are movements and works in the autochthonous literary history which appeared – chronologically speaking – before others from outside, and, still, Romanians, with their eyes traditionally fixed towards the Occident, deem these later ones as anticipatory. Surrealism and Dadaism are the examples given in this case” (idem, para. 1). Whatever the best of his intentions, however, his act of declaring protochronism “one of the dominant and defining traits of our literature in the world context” (Papu 1974, cited in Maier 1977, p.2) effectively opened up the Pandora box for the re-emergence of all

Indigenist interwar discourses, and for the application of protochronism to all domains¹¹⁶ of knowledge.

This also triggered a shift in the criteria proposed for determining value in the literary world, both in terms of market competition and circulation here and abroad. Believing that “being first ought to guarantee recognition”¹¹⁷ the protochronists advanced as their main criterion the notion of priority (Verdery 1991, p.181). In response, the “antiprotochronists – insisted the guarantor of success” was “not priority but something else – originality, quality” (idem). What ensued was a struggle over who was to “establish criteria of value within the Romanian literary community” (idem, p.182) and have a say in the re-evaluation¹¹⁸ of the existing literary canon. As an expression of this, starting with 1977, the concept of protochronism was transformed into a discourse supported, or appropriated, by a group of intellectuals – the protochronists, and moved from the level of a cultural attitude or imperative to a form of “cultural politics”: “Edgar Papu desired the changing of the self-image Romanians had about themselves; his critique was an internal one. The critique of his successors is not only internal, but also external, referring to the relation between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ and rejecting,

¹¹⁶ See Tomiță (2007, Chapter 5: “A Glorious History”) for a description of the domains of knowledge affected.

¹¹⁷ “...because, as Serafim Duicu explained in the above-mentioned Tribuna article, ‘the prominence or paternity of ideas and initiatives is a question of national dignity, and, why not, of national pride’” (Maier 1977, pp.3-4).

¹¹⁸ Tomiță (2007, pp.99-104) also describes how the protochronists have been able to “build a fictive tradition and to revendicate themselves as its legitimate continuators” by assuming the functions of re-edition, revision and reintroduction of the works of the classics (either heavily censored or lacking re-edition during the first phase of the Communist regime). The policy of re-editing the classics and providing versions “accessible” to the public should be seen as one of the main instruments of ‘historical revisionism’ on behalf of the Party (Verdery 1994:332, cited in Tomiță 2007, p.99), and, generally, as an attempt to alter the collective consciousness of the population according to the aims of the regime: “the appraisal of the cultural heritage becomes ‘an efficacious instrument for the formation of the new man (Itu, 1984: 3)’” (Tomiță 2007, p.103).

ultimately, the cultural dominance of the West... ‘Romanian culture is not subaltern and the road towards our own values does not pass through the Occident’” (Martin 2002ii, *Dezvoltarea protocronismului sau protocronismul ca actiune politica*, para. 1).

Thus, while protochronism started as an assertion of self-confidence regarding the competences and values of one’s own culture, it moved towards “the assertion of a self-sufficient culture, which must define its values after its own criteria, without consideration for the criteria and values from outside,” thus proposing autarchy and isolation for Romanian literature and culture (idem, *Protocronism vs. modernitate*, para. 2). This form of cultural politics effectively allowed its representatives (the protochronist group) to simultaneously entertain a double-game of power: one cultural, of disconnecting the process of valuation and value-creation from those established in the West and from those of the anti-protocronists, thus leaving themselves as the only group determining the criteria of value for Romanian culture; the other, political, of seeking to advance their influence over the regime and their position in its cultural/political structures by adopting an “indigenism” favored by the Party. This is observed by Verdery (1991, p.205) who summarizes the protochronist “game” as “seeking to build cultural authority on the basis of an innovation that potentially undercut the authority of others, through its insistence that only those accumulations based on indigenous values were legitimate.”

Considering this potential for political conformism it comes as no surprise that protochronism was soon captured by the Communist Party and refashioned into the main official cultural discourse of the 80s. Verdery (1991, p.206) has captured in great detail the ways in which, by its very nature, protochronism lent itself available to the purposes

of the regime: “Protochronist writings supported the personality cult of Ceaușescu, the relative autarchy attempted in the Ceaușescu era, the interweaving of Party history with the millennial history of Romanians, the call for socially/politically relevant art, the aggressive emphasis on territorial borders that might in fact be even bigger than the ones now on world maps, and the resistance to Soviet imperialism in all quarters. Within a social order whose dynamics was to maximize the control of the apparatus over resources, protochronism promised a literature that was Romanian, values that were Romanian – that is, literature and values of scant use to any but a Romanian state. Protochronism argued for a literature that was Romanian first, expressed openly its intentions of being useful to the state, and created lineages of Romanian cultural heroes through whom the broad reading public might be linked to the past and bright future of the Nation. There was a literature that both lent cultural authority to the political sphere, giving the Party leadership the appearance of being supported by learning and culture, and gained its producers (writers) and policemen (critics) great political influence. It pushed cultural production into the service of a new political order and enabled the executors of that order to penetrate a field of activity that had resisted penetration. And it helped to construct a fictive mono-ethnic cultural heritage from the political reality of a multi-national state. These effects constitute the ‘use-value’ of protochronism to the political apparatus.”

In conclusion, protochronism as a concept before 1989 should, therefore, be understood at three levels: as a notion in literary theory originating with Papu (early 70s), as the

‘cultural politics’¹¹⁹ promoted by the protochronists (late 70s), and as the official Party discourse which aimed for an excessive type of nationalism (the 80s). Where the line should be drawn between Papu, the protochronists, and then between them and the Party is an issue still subject to much debate. While some consider Papu an innocent victim of the protochronists (Patapievi, in Tomiță 2008), embraced and “cultivated” by protochronists such as Paul Anghel and Dan Zamfirescu in order to give “a more militant direction to his comparativism” (Martin 2002ii, *Aparitia protocronismului sau protocronismul ca atitudine culturala*, para. 5), others tend to view him as someone who sided with the Party’s cultural faction because of not being able to resist the privileges associated with official academic and political recognition (Tomiță, in Tomiță 2008). In terms of how and to what extent the protochronist group and the Party influenced each other there also are important differences. For example, according to Tomiță (2008), Verdery had a source in the pressroom of the magazine “Secolul XX” (The XXth Century) confess that Edgar Papu was in fact commanded to write about the concept of protochronism. Tomiță (idem) also states that, according to protochronist Eugen Florescu, Ceaușescu himself encouraged the idea of protochronism. Despite this, however, Verdery (1991) credits the protochronist/anti-protochronist competition for resources and for the definition of cultural values with having pushed the discourse under the control of the Party. From another perspective, Martin (2002iv) sees the exacerbated nationalism of Ceaușescu as having been considerably influenced by the protochronists. In his opinion, when Ceaușescu turned from the failed ‘cultural

¹¹⁹ The term can be used with two meanings, 1) to refer to the change of protochronism from a literary discourse to a cultural-political one, and 2) to actually refer to the set of political strategies through which the protochronist group managed to extract influence from the Communist Party in order to secure a ruling position in the cultural sphere.

revolution' towards the nationalist idea, the "Săptămîna" magazine group led by Eugen Barbu somehow succeeded in persuading him to adhere to their narrow version of nationalism (*idem*). Despite the fact that, as an official organ of the Party, the "Săptămîna" group did work together with the "Securitate" (Secret Services), and that, at the time, Eugen Barbu did have direct access to even Ceaușescu (Berdeli 2007), the extent to which the protochronist group and the Party had influenced each other remains, as yet, undetermined.

Moreover, despite the description provided so far, essential questions remain about the nature of protochronism (its functionality) and the reasons for its emergence and affiliation with the Communist regime. It seems imperative that any adequate inquiry into this phenomenon be able to give a consistent answer to the following question: how does protochronism originate as a public discourse? However, when translated into specifics, the question gains an added dimension of complexity: does protochronism derive from the nature of the regime or from the structure of the cultural field?

With regard to the first part of this inquiry, a number of questions seem essential. Was the Ceaușescu regime Leninist (Chen 2007), Stalinist (Martin 2003, Tismăneanu 2003), of Chinese or Asian extraction (Tolnay 2002) or one whose nature is essentially particular and unique (Crowther 1988)? How did the nature of the regime relate to the 'nationalist turn,' to the 'mini-cultural revolution' (the July Theses), to 'the cult of the leader,' to economic and foreign policy and to the political guiding of culture? What, if anything, could be discerned about the origin and character of protochronism from such an inquiry into the nature of the regime?

As for the second part of the inquiry, not that much is clear either, and a lack of consensus prevails if the views of different authors are put together.

Due to limitations imposed by the size of the chapter neither type of questions can be engaged with here. However, it is important to emphasize that without answers to such questions, the phenomenon of protochronism remains largely unexplored. For now, from both the cultural dimension (Maier 1977, Verdery 1991, Martin 2003, Tomiță 2007 and Macrea-Toma 2009) and from the political science perspective (Tismăneanu 2003, Tolnay 2002, Gavrilă 2004 and Crowther 1988), the only consensus remains that the phenomenon of protochronism, as either a form of ‘cultural protectionism’ (Maier 1977, Verdery 1991), a motivational discourse mobilizing production in all fields of activity (Gavrilă 2004), or as a “symbolic-ideological mode of control” (Verdery 1991) seeking to divert direction from massive economic failure (Crowther 1988), corresponded extremely well to the autarkic mode of development of the Communist regime, its cult of the leader, and its huge emphasis on production.

Protochronism as a Battlefield in Literary Studies

When discussing the pre-1989 effects of protochronism in the cultural sphere the usual reference is to a cultural battle taking place between two groups of intellectuals. A smaller group of intellectuals, advocating an excessive and autarchic nationalism, but able to elicit the support of the Communist State - the protochronists, and a larger group, which envisaged national culture as inseparable from its European and humanistic traditions - the anti-protochronists (Martin 2002ii, Verdery 1991, Tomiță 2007; 2008).

Martin (2002ii, ¶ 1) explains that the tendency for such an opposition had been triggered, prior to the appearance of protochronism, by “the rediscovery of national identity” generated by the regime’s turn to nationalism. As early as the late 60’s then, this had led to the rediscovery of an idealized “rural specificity” and historical past, for some, and to the reconnection not only with internal tradition, but also, with European and global culture, for others (idem).

The first group, Martin (idem, ¶ 3-5) asserts, was comprised of “ideologues” Mihai Ungheanu (literary critic), Paul Anghel (reporter) and Dan Zamfirescu (philologist and theologian), specialists in old Romanian culture and literature such as Virgil Candea, Al. Duțu, Gh. Mihăilă, Răzvan Theodorescu, Dan Horia Mazilu, Doina Curticăpeanu, Elvira Sorohan and writers such as Ion Lăncrănjan, Ion Gheorghe, and Gheorghe Pituț.

The second group was larger and included intellectuals of different ages, specialties and political orientations: a) interwar writers or literary critics, most of whom had been jailed - Ion Negoîtescu, Adrian Marino, Nicolae Balotă, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Ovidiu Cotruș, Alexandru Paleologu etc., b) “sympathizers of communism such as Vera Călin, Silvian Iosifescu and Paul Georgescu,” c) former members of the Central Committee of the Party such as Paul Cornea and Ion Ianoși, d) former ‘socialist realist’ literary critics such as Ovid. S. Crohmălniceanu or Savin Bratu, and e) relatively younger intellectuals such as Alexandru George, Gheorghe Grigurcu, Lucian Raicu, Livius Ciocârlie, Matei Călinescu, Ion Pop, Eugen Simion, Mircea Iorgulescu, Gabriel Dimisianu, Valeriu Cristea, Dan Grigorescu and Alexandru Călinescu etc. (idem, ¶ 2).

Protochronism came into ascendance when the autarchic nationalist group fused with the more influent Eugen Barbu collective from “Săptămâna”. This led to the formation of a protochronist group which had Edgar Papu and Eugen Barbu as mentors, Mihai Ungheanu, Paul Anghel, Dan Zamfirescu and Artur Silvestri as theoreticians of the new current, and figures such as Constantin Vadim Tudor and Adrian Păunescu as preeminent spokespersons (Tomița 2008). Controlling important press outlets with a wide audience, such as “Săptămâna” (Eugen Barbu, Dan Zamfirescu, Constantin Vadim Tudor), “Luceafărul” (Mihai Ungheanu, Artur Silvestri, Nicolae Dragoș), Flacăra (Adrian Păunescu, Ilie Purcaru), and “Scânteia Tineretului” (“Suplimentul literar”), the protochronist group was able to launch a protochronist campaign that would last a decade (idem). Despite the fact that criticism of protochronism had become almost equivalent with criticism of Party’s policies, the anti-protochronists responded, but in magazines that could not compare in terms of levels of audience or were usually provincial. While “România literară” (Nicolae Manolescu, Gheorghe Grigurcu), “Viața Românească” and “Secolul 20” constituted the main anti-protochronist magazines, important anti-protochronist articles were published by Andrei Pleșu in “Secolul 20,” Gheorghe Grigurcu, Alexandru Dobrescu, Alexandru Ștefănescu and Valeriu Condurache in “Convorbiri Literare”, Norman Manea in “Familia” and Tudor Cățineanu in “Steaua” (Martin 2002ii, ¶ 13-14). Outside the country, the dissidents Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca confronted protochronism and the Communist regime through their cultural shows at Radio Free Europe.

The results of this unequal confrontation that had dominated the cultural field in the 80’s have been somewhat mixed. On the one hand, through official support and a larger

influence in the mass-media, protochronism must have somehow succeeded in permeating the conscience of the entire population. On the other hand, as Martin (2002iii, ¶ 30) argues, it cannot be said that the protochronists won the battle: “On the contrary, the prestige of the interlocutors, the tacit refusal of the majority of intellectuals, the growing audience of Radio Free Europe, the general impression that that group [the protochronists] played according to the interests of a Power more and more hostile towards culture, **contributed to its isolation in the literary world** [my emphasis] and, implicitly, to a decrease in its measure of legitimacy. The spaces truly legitimating remained still ‘on the other side.’”

Protochronism in the Domain of History

While protochronism is usually discussed, like above, in relation to the literary world, it should be observed that, for the Communist Party, its principles were never as applicable to literature as to the domain of history. While an autarchic orientation was important, the criteria for how to produce literature were those of socialist humanism (and not of protochronism), that is, criteria aimed at creating typologies of heroes that reflected the ideals of the Communist nation. Protochronism did not succeed in severely altering the field of literary studies therefore, but its impact was greatly felt within the discipline of history, where the Party actively sought to reorder and capture the mythological dimensions associated with the nationalist idea.

As observed by Boia (2005, p.104), because in the 19th century the main objectives were the formation of a unified state and its alignment to the models and values of the Occident, a pro-Occidental type of nationalism dominated the scene. Starting with the year 1900, 30 years after the young Romanian state had adopted, between 1860 and 1870, the European legislative and institutional system (a constitution, a parliament, a responsible government, laws, universities, an academia etc.) (p.65) the focus shifted towards a nationalism concerned with its Romanian “individuality, specific culture and distinct destiny” (Boia 2001, p.59), defined primarily in relation to the rural system of values (Boia 2005, p.105) and which questioned the import of forms without substance (and, thus, of modernization). This contest found a sudden conclusion in 1948, when the Communist takeover resulted in 1) the adoption of a Russian model and a return to the East, 2) the promotion of anti-nationalism (with class struggle replacing nationalism) and 3) a violent program of industrialization at the expense of the rural population (pp.121-122). However, this only lasted until the end of the 1950s, when the Communist regime opted for a return to nationalism. Between 1964 and 1971, therefore, Romanian nationalism began its rehabilitation and reintegration into Romanian culture and contact with the West was resumed (p.128). This was not to last, however. For, finally, in 1971, the Party returned to the autochthonous nationalism of the interwar period, this time, directed according to the specific aims of the Communist regime, and expressed, increasingly, as ‘protochronism:’

“Nationalism became the decisive historical and political argument. United throughout their whole history, united around the single party and the Leader, the Romanians were infused with the vocation of unity, in other words, the subordination of the individual in

the face of the national organism and, at the same time, a strict delimitation of their own nation in relation to others. As a political instrument of legitimization and domination, nationalism gained advantage from the amalgamation of the authentic nationalist tradition and the specific aims pursued by the communist dictatorship. It seemed like a recuperation when in the first instance it was actually a manipulation (Boia 2001, p.77).

In this turn to nationalism, Boia (2005, p.143) argues, Communism associated the notion of the Party and its leader with the “great mythical configurations around which national conscience had crystallized and evolved”: the origins of Romanians, their continuity (territorial), their unity (as a people), Romanians and the Other/s, and the ideal Prince.¹²⁰ Each of these configurations were altered in specific ways in order to function as forms of Party legitimization and control, and strongly emphasized, they managed to dominate the imaginary of the Romanians long after the demise of Communism.

The Origins

This question regards the Dacian/Thracian-Roman origins of the Romanians, also mixed with the Slavic element. In the 1950s both Dacians and Romans are more subdued categories, while the Slavic element receives more attention than ever before. The emphasis is placed, at this stage, on reading ancient history in terms of the class struggle, with the Romans taking more or less the role of the Western imperialists and the Dacians

¹²⁰ This section relies extensively on Boia’s “History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness,” (2005/1997 for the Romanian version and 2001 for the English translation) which, in my view, stands as the most influential work on Romanian history as a whole in the post-Communist period. The five ‘great mythical configurations’ discussed here, namely, the origins of Romanians, their continuity (territorial), their unity (as a people), Romanians and the Other/s, the ideal Prince, constitute not only themes but the actual titles of five of the seven chapters of Boia’s book. In that respect, their discussion in light of protochronism also constitutes a schematic summary of this extensive body of work.

maintaining a low profile because of the anti-nationalist stance. Next, between the 60s and 70s, the focus shifts to a Dacian-Roman synthesis as the origin of the Romanians. From 1970s, however, the extreme Right's obsession with the Dacian element (from the interwar period) takes center stage, the biological essentialism associated with the idealized Dacians providing a solid foundation for an autochthonous nationalism. This makes it possible for the Party to celebrate, in 1980, "2050 years from the formation of Burebista's 'unitary and centralized' Dacian state" - a perfect way to legitimate Ceaușescu's unitary, centralized and authoritarian state (Boia 2005, p.134).

The Continuity

The problem of continuity relates to the question of the territory within which Romanians were constituted as a people. The question also marks the struggle for identifying the main aspect of Romanian-ness as either Latin or Dacian, or, sometimes, but more rarely, as a combination of such elements.

The "continuity" debate has its roots in the lack of historical evidence for the period between the retreat of the Roman Empire in the 3rd century AD and the formation of the first medieval state formations in the 14th century. The problem is compounded by the fact that while the Roman colonizing influence was much greater south of the Danube, the Latin element is historically manifested more strongly at north of the Danube. Thus, different historical theses posit the formation of the Romanian people on a territory similar to that of today's Romania, in a limited space within the same area (sometimes severely reduced in size), in a much larger territory that includes great portions from

Central and South-Eastern Europe, and, finally, somewhere south of the Danube, completely outside of the current borders of Romania (idem, p.189). Obviously, these interpretations can support different and sometimes very divergent political claims. For example, positing the formation of the Romanian people at south of the Danube can serve as 1) an argument for the Latinists, 2) as a way to affirm a Slavic (and, thus, Russian) influence as essential, or 3) as a way to argue that Hungarians were in fact the original inhabitants of the territory at north of the Danube (Boia 2005).

For obvious reasons then, while the 50s saw Romania defined in terms of the territory it then occupied (excluding claims for Bessarabia), but mainly as part of the larger Slavic element, the 70s affirmed the uninterrupted material and spiritual continuity of the Dacians on the same territory: the territory of the former ‘Dacia’ being ‘constructed’ as equivalent to that of “The Greater Romania” from 1918¹²¹ (pp.205-206). As Boia notices, the problem of continuity was not only territorial/ethnic, but also, political. Establishing the political continuity between Romanian and Dacian ruling elites would have bestowed a dignified political heritage to the Romanians. The Communist regime, in particular, could not resist such an opportunity. Thus, by defining Dacia, in 1975, as an “unorganized state” (a real contribution to the theory of the state, Boia comments ironically, observing that the notion of the state implies, by definition, some form of organization), the Communist Party managed to establish as dogma ‘the uninterrupted existence of the state from Burebista to Ceaușescu’ (p.208). This served several purposes at the same time: it gave an argument for claiming more territory and for

¹²¹ In addition to the established territory of Romania this also included the provinces of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Dobrudja (see maps of “The Greater Romania” at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Romania).

solving the Hungarian problem in Transylvania, affirmed the essential Dacian features associated with the recently revived autochthonous nationalism, and legitimated Ceaușescu's rule by portraying him as a descendant of Burebista. Last but not least, by imposing on a history of 2000 years and more the image of the unchanged territory of "Greater Romania," Ceaușescu's regime projected the image of an eternal Romania, and of an eternal Communist regime, self-sufficient and always able to fend off for itself (Boia 2005, p.201).

The Unity

The notion refers here to an ethnic or national type of unity that is exacerbated and imposed over the differences existing between regions and districts and within the larger population.

During the first phase of Communism this notion of unity was not of major concern. National unity was historically represented as a by-product of the economic need for a unitary market, while the 1859 unification of the two provinces, Moldova and Țara Românească, was taken to exemplify the Romanian bourgeoisie's struggle to secure its position by dominating a common market (and not a spirit of national unity)¹²² (idem, pp.228-229).

Not surprisingly, this trend is completely reversed in the 60s. At this stage, the interpretation which saw Michael the Brave having conquered Transylvania for the

¹²² In the same vein, the 1918 unification with the provinces of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina was considered an example of the aggressive actions of the Romanian bourgeoisie at the end of the First World War.

Austro-Hungarian Empire, is reversed to mark the first unification of Romanian territories, namely, Țara Românească, Moldova and Transylvania, in 1600 (p.230). After Michael, other kings and rulers would fall in line, consciously advocating the ideal of national unification. History erases, in this phase, the conflicts between the three provinces, or the fact that the 1848 revolutionary generation had different aims in each of these provinces, and had put forward different political programs for unification (p.233). Ethnic differences are overlooked in the attempt to claim the strong continuity of the Romanian element in all provinces. In schools, “students find out from some of their teachers that the ‘golden dream’ of Romanians, their ideal for centuries, had been that of unity” (p.236). Eventually, the emphasis on unity also structures the weather reports, where to pronounce the names of Romania’s regions is forbidden by the propaganda section of the Party: “Even the wind, rain and snow had to respect the Romanian unity. It was forbidden for rain to fall in Moldova, rain could fall at will, but in the north-east part of the country, not in Moldova!” (p.234).

As Boia concludes (p.229), this emphasis on unity was of great assistance to the totalitarian project of Communism. The use of history in order to emphasize the idea of unity as an essential aspect of Romanian-ness served to efficiently promote the formation of a uniform society, united around the figure of the leader/Party.

Furthermore, this tendency was only strengthened by the fact that the concept of unity posited the timeless existence of a national Romanian soul, which the Party could claim to best represent.

Romanians and the Other/s

In my estimation, the author fails to relate this theme directly with the Communist regime. Nevertheless, the discussion of this mythical configuration can be seen to emphasize certain protochronist features.

Two main factors, Boia (2001, p.153) claims, have shaped the way in which Romanians tend to perceive the Other/s: 1) “the reactions of a rural and somewhat isolated civilization” and 2) “the massive and uninterrupted impact of foreign rulers and models.”

With regard to the second point, Boia (2005, p.277) observes that Romania had witnessed three great disruptions within the last 150 years: the late 19th century break from the Orient, the 1948 departure from the Occident through the installation of Communism, and the 1989 return to the Occidental matrix. The superimposition of models and currents resulting from these disruptions has caused Romania to become a “transitional civilization” (engaged in an “endless transition”) deeply concerned with the Other: “from here, the tensed search for what others might be able to offer, from here, in no lesser a measure, the fear for what could be lost through contact with the others, from here, thus, the amalgam of fascination and rejection, in other words, the obsession with the foreign” (p.277).

A result of this has been that in the last few centuries Romanians have adopted the French, the autochthonous or the Soviet model almost religiously (p.271). If in 1853 the liberal politician I.C. Brătianu contended that a unified future Romania would function as a colony of France, at 1914, politicians of an independent Romania argued for entry in the First World War simply in order to save France (p.263). Similarly, after the

Second World War, Romania adopted the Soviet model (and its mythology) more faithfully than any other satellite-nation (p.271), and to such an extent that at the end of Ceaușescu's regime in 1989 Romania was deemed "closer to the original Stalinist model than the Soviet Union itself" (p.273).

On the one hand, Boia (2001, p.166) argues, "[t]his spirit of imitation highlights the fragility and instability of Romanian society, always looking for reference points that could be easily mythologized." On the other hand, this 'spirit of imitation' gives undue emphasis to the twin features of fascination and rejection. The fascination with the West is at least partly responsible for the negative stereotypes ascribed to the traditional neighbours of the country (for example, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Hungarians, and the Albanians), seen as deficient and undermining of Romania's development on a Western model. At the same time, the fascination with the autochthonous model tends to single out the Hungarians, the Roma and the Jews as the enemy within (pp.166-174). Protochronism, as a form of exacerbated nationalism, has often treaded this path, particularly through the discourses of Corneliu Vadim Tudor. More essentially, by attributing the backwardness of Romania to the pressures associated with internal and external enemies, protochronism and the autochthonous model have led to the formation of a "besieged fortress complex"¹²³ (p.155) at the level of the population. Employed by the Communist regime as a form of societal control, this sort of mentality has contributed to another popular subject of protochronism, namely, to

¹²³ The historical version of the argument, for example, states that the Occident was able to develop and prosper because Romania sacrificed and fought to stop invasions such as that of the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly, this complex is still part of Romanian society today, with protochronist Dan Zamfirescu (2011, ¶ 8-9) openly arguing that a "certain layer of Jews" is responsible, through global political machinations, for the waging of a "war of extermination" at the Romanian people."

conspiracy theories stating that the great Powers had aligned together with the aim of impeding Romania's glorious development (pp.175-177).

Last but not least, the fascination with the great Powers has also worked to cultivate a subconscious imperialist dream (pp.177-183). In the case of Communism, this finds expression in the desperate need of Ceaușescu to present Romania as indispensable to international negotiations and agreements, as a rising economic power and a country with an ever-expanding population, in short, as “a great country” (pp.183-184). After Communism, this “imperial temptation” is reflected in the continued currency of the view that “Ceaușescu had,” indeed, “discovered the recipe for the metamorphosis of a small country into a great power” (pp.177, 184). So much so that in 1993, the protochronist Dan Zamfirescu felt justified to claim that, from 1964 and until 1989, Romania had been the fourth greatest political power in the world, after Israel, USA and USSR (Zamfirescu 1993, cited Boia 2001, p.184).

The Ideal Prince

The myth of the saviour, of the hero, namely the presence of mythologized personalities, has taken in Romania a dominant particular form through the historical notion of the ideal prince. In larger terms, the notion is, in fact, no stranger to Communism. As Boia (2005, p.308) shows, the emphasis on mythologized personalities concerns the evolution of Communist ideology and historiography as a whole: “History as seen by Marx signifies problems, structures, laws, social-economical mechanisms, in any case, not personalities which take the center-stage. However, the Communist project needed

heroes, in order to justify and illustrate its own historical schema. ... Once installed in a position of command, the political inevitably generated a cult of the great makers of history. In fact, far from renouncing the pantheon, Communism only 'repopulated' it." It started by first replacing royal figures with the leaders of important uprisings and with famous revolutionaries stretching "from Spartacus to Robespierre" (idem). Then, as regimes consolidated, the theme of the great leader (Stalin, Mao, Ceaușescu) was installed at the heart of the system. Finally, in the later phases, the pantheon was altered, allowing personalities that announced and legitimized the rule of the great leader to be included as forerunners, even where this clearly stood against the principle of class-struggle: "The rise of Stalin brought Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great to the foreground, and Ceaușescu annexed for himself the whole constellation of Dacian kings and medieval voivodes" (Boia 2001, p.190).

Specifically discussing the formation of the Romanian pantheon of national heroes over a period of 200 years Boia (2005, p.309) sees the centrality of the "father of the nation," national saviour or hero motif as stemming from the need to cling to a fixed point of reference amidst violent and uncertain transitions. This need can be seen as responsible for the dominant tendency, within the discipline of history, to configure national history around the personalities of rulers.

In the early phases of national formation, which are also the early phases of the discipline of history, the heroic-warrior type of historical ruler is the overwhelming motif: "To submit after a fight is more praiseworthy than to submit without a fight, regardless of the price paid" (Boia 2001, p.192). The motif corresponds both to the need for militancy and sacrifice in achieving the national-political goals of independence and

unity, but also to the need, for a smaller new nation, to symbolically counter its own complex of inferiority by reminiscing moments in history when it had bravely resisted the great powers of Europe (*idem*).

Despite the lack of historical evidence, and despite Ioan Bogdan's Junimist criticism (in 1905) of an emphasis on personalities at the expense of culture, the early historians of the nation thus centered the constitution of national history around a succession of rulers, in many cases constructed according to false biographies¹²⁴ because of the biases associated with national sentiment (pp.191-199). In their attempt to construct a discipline of history and a past worthy of any European nation so as to legitimize the unification and sovereignty of Romania, the Romantic nationalists can be thus credited with having founded the national pantheon of historical heroic figures. From there on, this pantheon of figures would be revised and reconstructed with each new political regime coming into power, the apex of this process being reached during the later phase of Communism when Ceaușescu had himself made a king-like scepter.

Within the domain of history, Boia (pp.196-198) identifies the national pantheon between 1890 and 1940 as cementing a principle of authority that saw the mechanism of political power inserted into a single human being (with different parties, including the liberal one, believing that social reform and progress required a heavy hand). The myth of the ideal prince and of the saviour of the nation receives a new, romanticized emphasis through the royal dynasty of the Kings Carol I and Ferdinand, and also partly through the dynastic role of the Brătianu family in national politics. Starting with the 1930s, however, the new heroes or saviours of the nation develop a "totalitarian

¹²⁴ The list includes Michael the Brave (Boia 2001, pp.133-137), Vlad Țepeș and Ioan Vodă the Terrible, to name just a few of the most important cases (pp.197-199).

vocation” (p.212) with King Carol II, Marshall Ion Antonescu and the leader of the Legionary Movement, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the main examples. In each of these cases, the national pantheon gets reshuffled. And the same thing happens again when the new national saviours, the Communists, come into power.

The Dej regime makes sure to exclude from the pantheon the kings and rulers (or at least de-emphasize their status),¹²⁵ and the famous political figures of modern Romania such as the members of the Brătianu family (pp.214-215). These are replaced with leaders of popular uprisings (Horea, Cloșca și Crișan, or Tudor Vladimirescu) with the focus being placed on the 1848 revolutionary Nicolae Bălcescu (the figure from 1848 most accessible to Party symbolic recuperation and investment), and on the heroes of the working class, all constantly gravitating around the figure of the leader, but gradually disappearing or fading away in order for Dej to emerge as the only great leader from his time (pp.215-219). Ceaușescu follows in Dej’s footsteps, but he reinstates almost in an obsessive manner, and under the influence of the protochronists, the Dacian kings and the rulers of the Romanian provinces (Stephen the Great, Michael the Brave, etc.) (pp.219-223). Dej himself disappears from the pantheon of Ceaușescu, which now reactivates the figures first promoted by the Romantic nationalists (p.224). In contrast, the twentieth century is marked by an immense void in terms of national personalities¹²⁶ present in the pantheon, which only serves to better accentuate the amazing stature of Ceaușescu, who even as a 14 year old participated in Communist uprisings (p.225).

Culturally, the Ceaușescu regime is responsible for the most prolific circulation of

¹²⁵ With the major exception of King John, seen as historically a political ally of the Russian Czar (Boia 2001, p.215).

¹²⁶ The figure of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu would be rehabilitated in order to support domestic policy in the 60s and later, in the 80s, Romanian foreign policy would engineer the recuperation of Nicolae Titulescu so as to locate a worthy predecessor of Ceaușescu on the international scene (idem, pp.224-225).

symbols associated with the national pantheon and the protochronist themes. These include figures imprinted on different banknotes, countless statues and ceremonies and most importantly, the cultural productions which see the appearance of popular films centered on the theme of the ideal prince, with all the main historical figures being covered between 1963 and until 1989.¹²⁷

In conclusion to the discussion on the ‘ideal prince’, and as a way of underlining the influence the political can hold on national history, Boia (p.221) describes the simplified versions of the Romanian pantheon in the twentieth century as follows: “Trajan¹²⁸ and Carol I around 1900, Bălcescu and Gheorghiu-Dej in the 1950s, Burebista and Ceaușescu in 1980.”

These, then, are the five mythological configurations described by Boia, many of which will be reflected again and again in all sorts of protochronist productions, some of which will be briefly analyzed in the remainder of this chapter. However, beyond the impact of these mythological configurations, what exactly has been the overall impact of protochronism on the field of history? Like Mircea Martin with regard to the resistance put forward by the literary world, Boia argues that protochronism did not succeed to impose itself in the academic departments of history. The Party, acting through the Party Institute of History and through the Center for Military History, ultimately failed to impose a protochronist direction in the university departments and in the civic research centers that served the domain of history (p.81). This lack of commitment from the

¹²⁷ “Tudor” in 1963, “The Dacians” and “The Column” (in 1967 and 1968), Michael the Brave (1971), Stephen the Great: Vaslui 1475 (1975), Dimitrie Cantemir (1975), Vlad Țepeș (1978), Burebista (1980) and Mircea the Great (1989) (p.221).

¹²⁸ The Roman emperor who had colonized the Dacia province, representative of the Latin element in Romanian identity.

academic world resulted in a “disorganized and inefficient historiographical movement,” which saw, for example, the great Communist project of a ten volume synthesis of Romanian history (started in 1975) miserably fail before the appearance of the first volume (idem). In the words of Boia, “[t]he pure, hard Dacianism of the Party and military historians came up against the more balanced position of the university historians and professional archeologists” (idem). Nevertheless, Boia’s conclusion is that despite the subtle forms of resistance put forward by the historians, the population at large had been subjected to a propaganda of “virulent nationalist demagogy,” the forms of which continue to shape people’s imaginary in the present (p.82).

Protochronism: from History to Legend – the Stereotypical Hero and “Packaged Communism”

While creating or reshuffling a new national pantheon is quite an accomplishment, it is the manner of representation which gives this enterprise its particular substance and effect. In terms of Ceausescu’s regime, the main representational strategy, of protochronist extraction, is based on endowing historical figures with contemporaneity (Mitchievici 2005, p.337). This feature allows the heroes of the nation to actively participate in the glorious undertakings of the Party as spread-through-time versions of the ideal model embodied in the ‘great leader’. In protochronism, therefore, heroes have no age, so that they can all move throughout history, speaking the same “language of Communist-nationalist propaganda” (idem, p.340). Borrowing from the Romanticist

historians of the nation, Communism sets the heroic-warrior type of figure as emblematic. The features of this iconic representation which pervades disciplines such as history, poetry, literature, which shapes the moral ideal in the educational field and which constitutes the central symbol of popular movies of the Communist era, unfolds on two axes. The first, an axis of moral virtues, with humbleness, hospitality, openness, honesty, generosity and pacifism (p.355) as main features which fix the hero in the humanistic genre – moral features which could be summarized under the designation ‘purity of heart’. The second, a dimension where the peaceful hero (usually, a common individual) is forced to defend against an enemy infinitely stronger, in a sort of ‘one against all’ scenario, by activating a sacrificial attitude of the kamikaze type, a sort of emotional paroxysm which can make up for the lack of strength, weapons or numbers, in order to defend certain ideals (usually involving the nation and generally reflecting the idea of justice and of the greater good) (pp.348-351): “Invincibility is in this case assured by pathos, what counts is the intensity of hate, of the fury doubled by the legitimacy of the cause” (p.351). As observed by Mitchievici (p.348), the principle of “the most destitute = the weakest = the most honest” turning out to be the greatest hero, has roots both in Christian mythology and in the romantic myth of the noble savage who is good because he is pure. The principle is also one, which, because of its reversal from zero to hero, seems designed to appeal to the masses. In fact, by cultivating a certain devotion regarding the ideals of the nation, Party and its leader, the function of the principle seems to be that of inserting an attitudinal trigger device that can elicit total engagement from the masses, to the point of ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic death. For death, as the Romanian mythical heroes portray it, is something to laugh at fearlessly while in the quest for eternity. And, in case the hero fails to succeed and is

martyred, then, often a case of treason can be invoked, meant to substantiate the belief that Romania's great destiny is somehow always thwarted by fate, in the form of some aggression induced by an external factor (p.364).¹²⁹

Overall, then, the heroic-warrior type of figure is, in fact, a perfect illustration of the two main aspects of the hero-mechanism associated with socialist humanism: 1) the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something bigger (Nation, Party, Justice, Eternity, etc.) and 2) the myth of the pure-hearted individual who seeks to actively internalize the Good. The mythological procedure through which the 'heroization' of history takes place in the second part of the Communist period, however, reflects not so much a strategic investment at the level of beliefs (like during the Romantic nationalism of the 19th century or in the early phases of Communism), but rather, the shaping of attitudes and psychological reactions through a sort of consumerist appeal to what is 'cool.' Partially, this explains the amazing influence of "Povestiri istorice" ("Historical stories/legends"), a collection of storybooks by Dumitru Almaş¹³⁰ (and a fantastic illustration of the tenets of protochronism), which became compulsory school material and guided the formation of textbooks while also dominating the personal libraries of Romanian families. For ultimately, by pushing history into legend and then further into utopian and contemporaneous myth, Almaş opened the way for a new type of "paraliterature" (p.346), one not only successful in terms of sales, but later institutionalized into the official canons of the school-environment: "Heroism is brought, after all, in the quotidian through a subtle slip, *the heroic style* of reading history, which

¹²⁹ Reflecting a deep inferiority complex, this sort of scenario ultimately functions as another way of emphasizing the "besieged fortress mentality" previously discussed by Boia (2005).

¹³⁰ The essay of Mitchievici (2005) focuses, in fact, on assessing the role of Dumitru Almaş and of his collection of historical stories from the perspective of cultural studies.

Almaş proposes in these stories” (p.364). One example, from the many given by Mitchievici, should suffice here: “Gelu the Romanian does not hesitate to place even the last of his arrows in the bow in order to launch it towards the enemy, this is exactly the arrow stuck in his own chest. As if this was not enough, Gelu also prefers his dead body not to fall in the hands of the enemy, and he has time for this [his horse quickly burying him according to the hero’s indications – ‘With your hoot, dig my grave, here near the water, then grab me with your teeth and throw me in the hole’]” (pp.252-253).

The emphasis on heroic coolness (and on the heroic type figure) as a consumerist strategy is even more obvious in the movies of Sergiu Nicolaescu, the most successful film-maker in Communist Romania, and considered, in fact, the innovator of the consumerist-communist mix in the genre of adventure or historical movies (Manolescu 2004i, p.308). Based on the promotional strategy which forced the buyer to purchase his favourite book only as part of a package containing less tasty products such as discourses of Ceauşescu, Communist school pedagogy or anthologies of lyrics dedicated to the Romanian Communist Party etc., this phenomenon of Communist consumerism has been creatively characterized by Manolescu (p.283) as “packaged Communism.” As described by Manolescu, (p.281) “packaged Communism” works by “integrating the segments of official ideology into the structures of consumer culture,” thus adding a version of soft Communism (adventure plus political propaganda) alongside an already existent version of hard Communism (political discourses presented in print, at radio or television). At first glance, soft Communism seems to benefit everyone involved, the authors, for giving them the possibility of exercising a duplicitous strategy which can involve financial gains, the Party, in terms of making official dogma more accessible,

and the public, because of access to some form of entertainment making the totalitarian regime more tolerable (idem). However, in overall terms, the only real winner to be counted is the Party (p.282). For, by acting as the “creator, diffuser and collector of its own ideology” and also as a “contestant of it, through directed subversion or tolerance,” the Party is able to disseminate itself in the field of cultural commerce (and to enter the aesthetical canon) through a totality of strategies “for whose political ‘analysis’ and cultural ‘deconstruction’ they [the masses] ha[ve] neither the presence of spirit, nor the motivation or the necessary professional training” (idem). Thus, what starts in the period of socialist realism as the direct, religious, hard Marxist-Leninist discourse of the hero-mirror mechanism continues, in the period of socialist humanism, as a complex discourse which proposes, alongside the hard version, an alternative and more subtle consumerist-humanist version. The mirror mechanism of the hero stays the same, but the resulting product is different.

This is how Manolescu (p.309) describes the prototype of the new hero of socialist humanism, based on the main character of the famous police-movie series of Nicolaescu: the ‘commissaire’ Moldovan “does not drink (only occasionally, when lecturing his enemies); does not smoke; does not read; has an exemplary-child in school, ‘the second in his class’ (*the communist cliché of scholarly diligence*), whom the legionaries, at the command of corrupt politicians, hurry to kill; he does not play cards; has no erotic life; is dedicated, at the same time, both to his small job and to the great ideals of humanity, above all, hating dirty and easy money (*the cliché of incorruptibility and that of making a profit through honest work*). ‘Objective’ from a political point of view, he embodies both the qualities of the adventurer (courage, speed of reaction, spirit

of initiative, enjoyment of action, colored language etc.), and those of the Party member (faith in the leftist ideals of social and political justice, bombastic patriotism, declared modesty, civic spirit, predispositions toward the ‘wooden tongue’ and didacticism of ‘the golden era’).”

It is clear that what distinguishes the hero of the movie in this case is the myth of the pure-hearted individual seeking to actively internalize and reflect the Good (of the nation, of humanity, and at personal level, in terms of universal values).¹³¹

Not surprisingly then, that Moldovan, the “virtual communist” (p.309), the pure-hearted hero described above, would die fighting against all odds, and in a most memorable scene (though later he would be ‘revived’ for the continuation of the series), thus also

¹³¹ Nevertheless, there are also elements of subversion in the character of Miclovan/Moldovan (modelled, in fact, paradoxically, after the action heroes played by James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart in their gangster movies). The movies are shot in the American, Hollywood style, always including some musical or dancing scene typical of Hollywood but totally exotic on the Romanian scene and completely unavailable in Romanian everyday life. These instances of complete bourgeois/capitalist culture are reflected in the character of the hero, a bourgeois man with an adventurous spirit who seeks to enjoy life fully (fashion, guns and cars, but also women; there are even allusions in one of the 6 movies in the series, namely “The Duel,” that he had been visiting high-class prostitutes), and who is also neutral or apolitical (though he is slowly won over by the Communists and, eventually, these leanings towards the Communists will bring him extremely close to them if not completely in their camp). After all, as Nicolaescu has confessed after 1989, the character of Miclovan/Moldovan had actually been constituted as a tribute to his uncle (“He was elegant, impressed through physical build, and was fond of women and fast cars.”), Gheorghe Cambrea, a real police commissaire, who despite having opposed the Legionnaires (the Iron Guard) at the time of their rule, was unjustly kicked out of the police force (in 1945) and then, subsequently jailed (between 1950 and 1965) by the Communist regime (Condurăţeanu 2004). It seems that, despite these subversive elements, these movies of Nicolaescu were allowed to pass censorship because of the desperately low attendance records shown by the Romanian films of the time in movie theaters around the country (especially when in comparison with Western movies). Indeed, this possibility is only strengthened by Macrea Toma (2010, p.186)’s argument that, since the end of the 1950s, the cinematographic trend had been to use Western movies, only 10% of the total number of movies imported, “to cover the losses caused by the propaganda films.” Whatever the case, it is also clear that another reason for these movies meeting the criteria of censorship, and probably the main one, is given by the actual consumerist-communist mix (or ‘packaged Communism’) manifested at the level of content. From this perspective, these movies of Sergiu Nicolaescu constitute a prime example of that form of cultural resistance that resembles “diffidence” and which Macrea-Toma (2010, pp. 233, 280-281,328) describes as “integrated non-conformism.”

confirming the other original axis of the hero mechanism, namely, the myth of the hero ready to sacrifice everything for something greater (Nicolaescu 1974).

In fact, a quick look at Nicolaescu's most popular movies reveals that the hero-mirror mechanism, with its two axes (virtue/sacrifice), is always the essential motif around which the plot unfolds. His first movie, "Dacii," (The Dacians) illustrates this through the ritualistic self-sacrifice of King Decebalus' son Cotyso, "the most handsome, the most good-hearted, and the most brave," as a messenger sent to communicate the wishes of his people to their god Zalmoxis in times of approaching war. "Why do the Dacians laugh before they die?" the roman envoy asks Decebalus. Because Zalmoxis has given them many lives and therefore the best way to depart into the next one is through laughter and not crying, comes the answer. In the opening scene, the advancing Romans troops demand the Dacians to open their frontier wall to "the Rulers of the world" in exchange for their lives and freedom. "You will be, but only if we die," shout the Dacians, calling the attack. Following a circular structure, the last shot in the movie freezes with the Dacian king and his army attacking the onrushing Roman armies head on (quickly followed by a glorified representation of their actually lost battle taken from Trajan's Column). In between, the rest of the movie centers around one theme: the readiness of Dacians to die for the independence of their land (punctuated at the level of the plot by three important instances of Dacian self-immolation), in order to assert their values of freedom in the realm of the Absolute (and also, in that of universal history) (Nicolaescu 1967)¹³².

¹³² Interestingly, this first movie of Nicolaescu (and others of the same genre) corresponds, at the level of policy, to the August 1968 reintroduction of the "Patriotic Guards" and the formulation of the doctrine of "War of the Entire People" (1969) – both measures aimed to ensure that a militia force of 900.000 and

That the same motif applies to “Mihai Viteazul” (“Michael the Brave”/“The Last Crusade”) is evident from “the opening sequence where a man in the midst of battle in a muddy swamp cries out ‘victory’ and is immediately turned, Mifune-like¹³³ into a human porcupine, with arrows flying into his chest from all directions” (Fish 2009). In the movie, probably the most renowned of the Communist period, the historical figure of “Michael the Brave” is depicted as a symbol of the unity of all Romanians and of self-sacrifice for that ideal. The movie, allegedly an authentic representation of history, presents Michael’s relentless struggle to unite the three main provinces of Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia into one country, despite competing interests from the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. With countless sacrifices (including that of his son, which is counter to historical reality) and through many battles, Michael the Brave achieves this unification of the future territories of Romania in 1600, but this is short-lived as betrayal sees the Prince quickly lose even his province of Wallachia. Fighting “to the very end,” Michael just about accomplishes the unification of the three provinces once again, but through betrayal of his ally, he dies assassinated in his day of victory. The end of the movie makes it explicitly clear that, despite his death, Michael the Brave had achieved, if only briefly, the national idea which had always motivated him. Through his heroism and sacrifice, the viewing audience is told, Michael the Brave had secured the formation of the Romanian nation

which could expand to 6 million, “would provide the backbone of a guerilla struggle of the entire population against any invading army” (Crowther 1988, p.93). Furthermore, this is how Tismăneanu (2008) interprets Ceaușescu’s speech condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968: “Ceaușescu cynically used the crushing of the Prague Spring as an excuse to enhance his own personality cult. He insisted on imposing a unified domestic front to counter any supposed Soviet attack. **He created a self-serving mythology in which he was the fearless hero, the symbol of the unity of party and nation**” [my emphasis].

¹³³ Toshiro Mifune is a famous Japanese actor who plays the warrior-hero in many of the Akira Kurosawa films.

for the future. Thus, in the last shot of the movie, Michael, despite being deadly injured, walks serenely (the heroes of Sergiu Nicolaescu can only die standing) towards the viewer, reminiscing on the import of his life's vision: "I will go until the very end, wherever this end might take me. And I want this people to know, more and more, what it wants, and to realize what it can, because I leave as heritage to it an accomplishment. Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia, this is what I have always wished for!"

(Nicolaescu 1970)

It shall be remarked here, that this scene at the end of the movie is remarkably similar to the typology of the hero adopted by Dumitru Almaş (1982) in his protochronist-consumerist historical tales: "Whatever the case, the hero refuses to die before he has completed his symbolic mandate, this sometimes consisting in the enunciation of a simple encouraging formula. The hero has always something to say at the end, he is always given time to conclude, to have the last word. ...This cardboard superman cannot end the conflict in the quotidian, but he will resolve it in the absolute. Death is never the final station, but only the place from which forces will be rejuvenated for a second coming" (Mitchievici 2005, p.352). The protochronist character of the movie is also confirmed by how its structure unfolds around the myth of Unity, the myth of the Ideal Prince and the myth of Conspiracy, before culminating in the 'besieged-fortress complex.'

Truly a "priority," however, is to ascribe to Michael the Brave the intention of building a unified national state, "two centuries before the concept of the national state had crystallized in the rest of Europe" (Boia 2001, p.139). Or to read his achievement as derived from a "consciously Romanian" sense of action (idem) for national unity, in the

context in which Romanian historiography of the 17th and 18th centuries, and even a 19th century movement of national consciousness such as the Transylvanian School, had interpreted the 1600 moment through anything else (the exceptional ambition of the Prince, his defense of Christianity, his close ties with Emperor Rudolf II) except the presence of a national idea (p.39-42). As it stands, because of Communist historiography, but especially through the movie of Nicolaescu, the myth of Michael the Brave remains one of the most important and most lasting protochronist myths. Such has been the influence of this myth and movie in Romanian consciousness that in order to boost Mr. George Becali's image as a modern Michael the Brave, his party ("The New Generation") employed scenes from the actual movie in the 2004 presidential campaign, being sued for it by the daughter of the actor Amza Pellea.

The story of Michael the Brave (1970) continues with "Nemuritorii" ("The Immortals") (1974), "a fairy tale on a historical theme" (Zaharia 2011, ¶ 13) where thirteen soldiers of Michael return to the Romanian provinces 10 years after his death, to retrigger his dream of unification. Together they carry with them, across Europe, a chest supposed to contain all the riches of Michael the Great, and, also, the standard of the union of the three provinces. On their trails are the Ottoman troops of Selim Paşa who is intent on capturing the treasure. After many adventures, the 13 heroes manage to return to Wallachia, only to find out that the ruler they were hoping to aid in continuing Michael's dream had been removed by forces of the Ottoman empire, who now control the region (with the aid of the local authorities). What they also find here is an almost empty fortress, whose caretaker was guarding it from the time of Michael the Brave. When an army led by Selim Paşa and local Romanian support is spotted approaching them, the

remaining twelve heroes decide to have a stand-off in order to defend the union flag placed on the top of the highest tower of the Romanian fortress. This decision is taken despite the fact that their chest of riches contains only stones - now revealed as only a fabrication of the group's original leader (now dead) meant to convince his troops to return home and fight for the ideal of re-unification. The caretaker is sent to spread the news of the return of Michael's standard to the peasants, with the promise being made that the flag will still be flying high by the time the rallied forces return. The twelve resist heroically the offensive of an entire army, dying one by one until only Captain Andrei (played by Sergiu Nicolaescu himself) is left. In the end, Captain Andrei is asked to surrender the chest in exchange for his life and freedom. He agrees to do so, but when Selim Paşa, the local leader and few of their troops approach him in a hurry (pressed by the news that thousands of armed peasants are approaching), Captain Andrei blows himself up, killing everyone else as well. As a conclusion, the clear implication in the movie is that this heroic sacrifice and the flag have fulfilled their mission: the Romanian peasants are now ready to fight for the twin ideals of independence and unity.

Like "Michael the Brave" then, "The Immortals" are equally centered on the hero-mirror mechanism and the myth of Unity. Essentially, the movie was supposed to end with the thirteen heroes standing near their own graves, just behind their own crosses, an image supposed to point to their true immortality, and to the idea of their return. The Party censored this scene, probably because advocating such an idea of return in the present was rightfully interpreted as potentially problematic for the regime. After all, the idea that heroes who can 'awaken' the whole Romanian people to fight for independence can appear anytime in the present was not exactly the type of message the Communist

system wanted mass-distributed. Particularly, as the excellent soundtrack of the movie featured the famous Romanian rock-band “Phoenix” (name which constitutes another symbol of immortality and return), who had since left the country illegally.

What essentially differentiates “The Immortals” from “Michael the Brave” in terms of the mirror-mechanism then, is the idea that these 13 heroes are not only historical characters, but archetypal essences, combining virtue, courage and sacrifice, in a manner comparable with that of the 12 apostles of Jesus or the 12 Imams of Muhammad (together, also 13): “Even since 1971 I had this idea of a group of ‘13 immortals’, who appeared in history whenever they were needed, showing that courage and readiness of sacrifice which could have served as an example for others” (Nicolaescu cited in Wikipedia, “Nemuritorii”).

In the end, then, by mixing the legendary with history, the mythological with the real, and the cool with the idea of self-annihilation, the productions of Almaş and Nicolaescu not only contribute to the general investment of Communist society in a utopian dimension (‘a society living in the imaginary’), alongside the dimensions of the hero-mirror mechanism, but also, essentially, towards making protochronism digestible and even trendy.

Conclusion: Protochronism as a Discourse of the Mirror Mechanism (and of Socialist Humanism)

It would seem strange, because of its apparent rejection of European values and its nationalistic focus, to associate protochronism with Socialist Humanism.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, rejecting European values and asserting nationalism does not take place at the expense of the hero mirror-mechanism or of its central focus on humanism and the ideal of the perfect human. If in the first stage, the humanistic discourse is restricted to the legitimization of the revolutionary movement and to constructing the perfect man and society after the Russian model, in the second, the process expands by allowing humanistic forms to include and be coloured by themes relating not only to Marxist-Leninism but also to nationalism. Rather than a disruption, this counts more as an enlarged and more hybrid form of continuity. Where in the first stage generalized humanism had its implications attached to Marxist-Leninist concepts and objectives, in the second stage, the resulting implications of this are themselves impressed with a nationalistic orientation. That is why, despite the differences in final implications, both the ideal Communist and the ideal nationalistic Communist must be devoted to the great ideals of humanity as a starting point. In fact, the only difference between the two is that the national idea allows for more implications in the dissemination of a ‘generalized

¹³⁴ Socialist humanism (1964-1989) has been previously described as a discourse under the auspices of Party rule, which makes way for a ‘generalized humanism,’ able to disseminate the desired Socialist mentality within the population at large.

humanism': in socialist humanism, a good human being is not only a Communist hero, but also a national hero of some sort. That the humanistic device of the mirror-mechanism continues through protochronism and nationalism (and even receives a more humanistic orientation) is also clear from the types of archetypes promoted.

The quintessential kamikaze-heroes of Dumitru Almaş who appear, from antiquity to the present, from children to women to men, from peasants to workers to intellectuals and political leaders, as embodiments of the same heroic ethnic substance (Mitchievici 2004, p.348), faithful and ever-ready to honour their death-hero contract with the Party (p.365), or the popular film-heroes of Nicolaescu's movies, where the most pure, the virtuous and the best die, in absolutely inspiring fashion, for the good of the nation, in a chain stretching from the Dacians, to the historical figures of the Middle Ages, to completely made up mythological characters, and to the heroes of the War of Independence or of the First and Second World Wars¹³⁵, these all confirm, within the context of humanistic ideals, the two axes of the hero-mechanism: purity of heart (sum of humanistic virtues) and sacrifice for a larger cause. And, indeed, what else is protochronism if not the 'heroization' of nationalism?

And here there might be a more important question to be found. For if protochronism produces heroization and heroes, the next question to then ask should be why that is so.

Is the notion of priority in culture employed primarily in order to create heroes and masterpieces that can compare with or surpass those of the West, in fact launching the

¹³⁵ The last such movie, about a heroine of the First World War, appeared in 1999 ("Triunghiul Morții" – "The Triangle of Death"). A similar movie about the Second World War ("Trenul Morții" – "The Train of Death") was in the books for 2012 but filming has been delayed and the project could be aborted because of the large number of army soldiers needed as figurants.

claim that Romanian culture should be included alongside those great cultures which have come to represent the best achievements of humanity? Is that how we should explain the production of endless lineages of protochronist contributions and heroes¹³⁶, from scientific fields like biology, medicine, metallurgy and aeronautics to disciplines like psychology, mathematics and linguistics, culminating of course, with the domains of literature and culture¹³⁷ (Tomiță 2007, pp.123-163)?

There is certainly an appeal to such explanations, considering the complex of inferiority that has traditionally dominated Romanian culture. However, another possibility is that the Communist system simply could not stop producing heroes. That once it started on the road to utopia via the use of the hero-mirror mechanism there was no way back or outside of it. And that as it moved, through economic and then through cultural policy, towards an autarkic model, its production of heroes became more and more limited to the space of the nation. For as long as the Communist system was set up as a spiritual form of government, governing through the “inner utopia” or the inner aspect of the human being (his private self) (Șerban 2010), it could only continue to rule through a mirror-mechanism that circulated images of heroes as fulfilled standards of morality. Or otherwise put, a revolutionary movement that thought it was meant to refashion the notion of very humanity through mobilization of all its forces (especially those of the population as a whole) could only try to do so by promoting ideal images of it, in which it might be added, it also believed. What is the idea of the ‘new man’ even in Romanian Communism? It is first the projection of an ideal of humanity, and only secondarily, a

¹³⁶ “The series of precursors opens with the Geto-Dacians, traverses Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modernity, before closing triumphantly with the figure of the ‘genius Leader’ Nicolae Ceaușescu, himself the forerunner of some major tendencies in world politics” (Tomiță 2007, p.132).

¹³⁷ Even the “Flacăra Cenacle,” which forms the subject of a later chapter, was involved in a mass-media campaign to reveal worldwide pioneering achievements in the medical-pharmaceutical field (idem, p.131).

matter of national character. And maybe the argument should be extended, at least as a possibility, also to the notion of protochronism. Maybe protochronism too could be primarily represented as a form of humanism (or at least, as also a form of humanism) rather than just as an excrescence of nationalism, if not in its effects at least in its cause. For, as Tomiță (2007, pp.92-93) observes, while indigenist and nationalistic, protochronism goes at length to portray the space of the Balkans (and of Romania, in particular) as “a new European spiritual center” “ready to take on the mission of ‘spiritual renewal’ of human experience” by providing the declining West with “the dough of a new humanity:” “a humanity of human solidarity, instead of the humanity of universal hostility in which we live.” The implication, of course, is that the protochronists themselves are, or should be, heroes, “Supermen” of a new humanism, for as one of them observes: “It is no small matter to be the spiritual dough for a new humanity” (Purcaru 1986, cited in Tomiță 2007, p.92).

Finally, it can then be concluded, through the protochronist discourse, the humanistic device of the hero-mirror mechanism remains central and largely unchallenged during communism. Moreover, this legacy of protochronism continues into post-communism, although in much diluted form.

However, a note of caution should be sounded here. Tomiță’s (2007, pp.318-319) final assessment is that protochronism was caused by the influence of politics over culture, even in its mature phase never reaching beyond the status of a “false idea” with chaotic ramifications, before vanishing with the demise of Communism. Nevertheless, as Negrici (2008, p.222) shows throughout his book on “The Illusions of Romanian Literature,” protochronism was only exploiting weaknesses (“the confusion, obsessions

and the tendency to idealize”) already present in Romanian culture and literature since the beginning of the nation. As Negrici (p.8) argues, the Romanian “effervescence of mythogenesis” is caused by the feeling of insecurity, which the turbulent historical development of “our national being” almost constantly generates. Thus, mythogenesis in Romanian literature derives from two impulses: a “protective” one, derived from “a diffuse feeling of danger,” and a “compensatory” one, derived from “a feeling of vacuity and of frustration.” As Negrici (2008) views it, the protective impulse generates three types of mythological constellations, “the tabooing of the literary patrimony” (a cult for the classics and their masterpieces, a belief in perennial values and their stability, resistance against any revision of the canon etc.), the deification of literary personalities as defenders of the nation (“civilizing heroes,” “founding fathers,” geniuses, protective spirits, the “recuperated” figures etc.) and the idealization of some literary periods or generations. On the other hand, the compensatory impulse leads 1) to an attempt to mime normality by ignoring grave dysfunctions of evolution (like those induced by the Communist system in the literary field, or by the pressures of pre-Communist ideologies such as Sămănătorism, Popularism and Gândirism) and their effects, 2) to an obsession with distant origins, greatness and elements of ‘priority’ for Romanian literature and with suggesting for it a great richness and diversity that it does not possess (the artificial claims that currents such as Humanism, Renaissance, Baroque, Pre-romanticism etc. existed and were well-grounded in Romania, for example) and 3) to a desperate need to achieve synchronization (which results in problematic claims regarding the existence of a Romanian Romanticism in literature, to a false situation in which truly modernist are only the Romanian neo-modernists, and to the unproductive urgency to develop and claim a post-modernist current that can oppose modernist literature, in the conditions in

which modernist literature itself, and literature as a whole, is actually underdeveloped) (idem). Despite its possible idiosyncrasies, this analysis of the overall state of Romanian literature has a certain merit: that of revealing literary protochronism as only the exaggerated continuation of mythological constellations, themes and concepts already in existence. This finding has significant import. Firstly, because it signals that, despite Tomiță's optimistic outlook, protochronism has not vanished and is bound to reappear (very possibly, in new forms), being, at a structural level, always present¹³⁸ in Romanian culture. Secondly, that deconstructing the phenomenon of protochronism requires going beyond the visible part of the proverbial iceberg, to the deep structures, which in this case involves the entirety of Romanian culture in relation to the processes of nation-formation and modernization (and, here, the political influence of the Romanian Communist regime, still unaccounted for with any degree of certainty, remains crucial).

¹³⁸ See, for example, one of the latest protochronist documentaries about the Dacians released in 2012: „Dacii – Adevăruri tulburătoare” (‘Dacians – Unsettling Truths’) by Daniel Roxin.