New Europe College Yearbook
Ștefan Odobleja Program
2020-2021

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74

New Europe College Yearbook
Ștefan Odobleja Program
2020-2021

ELENA BRODEALĂ
MAGDALENA CRĂCIUN
LUCIA DRAGOMIR
ANDRADA ISTRATE
CIPRIAN JELER
LUCIANA JINGA
IOANA MANEA
ANCUȚA MORTU
CĂTĂLIN ȚĂRANU

CONTENTS

ELENA BRODEALĂ

Born in 1989, in Victoria, Brașov
Ph.D. in Law, European University Institute (2019)
Dissertation: *Legal and Constitutional Developments in the Field of Gender Equality in Post-Communist Romania. An Analysis in the Framework of the Public/Private Divide*

Post-doctoral researcher, University of Zurich and adjunct lecturer at Sciences Po, the Reims Campus, France

Fellowships and grants:
Yale Law School's Robina Fellow at the European Court of Human Rights and the Information Society Department of the Council of Europe (2018 – 2020)
Visiting researcher at the Kent Center for Law, Gender and Sexuality in the UK (2018) and at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary (2015)

Attended academic conferences and workshops in many European countries as well as in the USA and Canada

Published in the areas of gender and the law, human rights law (particularly the European Convention on Human Rights) and constitutional law

GENDER AND SEXUALITY UNDER ROMANIA'S 1991 CONSTITUTION: BETWEEN MARGINALIZATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Abstract

This working paper aims to scrutinize the 1991 Constitution from the perspective of gender and sexuality. To contextualize the analysis, the paper first discusses the status of gender and sexuality in the previous constitutions of Romania. Then, the paper moves on to questions of gender and sexuality under Romania's current Constitution since its drafting in 1990 until July 2021, the time of writing. In particular, the paper looks at gender- and sexuality-related matters of constitution-making, constitution-drafting and constitutional adjudication in post-communist Romania. Overall, the paper argues that gender and sexuality have progressed from being marginal issues under Romania's Constitution to being the subject of serious contestation on the constitutional front, attracting important public attention and participation.

Keywords: Gender and the Law, Romanian Constitution, the Romanian Constitutional Court, Sexuality, LGBT+ Rights, Women's Rights, Gender Equality in Romania

1. Introduction

"Gender and Constitutionalism" has become an established field of study in many countries, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world.[1] Scholars have scrutinized the manner in which constitutionalism promotes gender equality from different angles. They have looked into issues of constitution-making, asking whether women have participated in the writing of their countries' constitutions and whether and how women's interests have been included in constitutional texts.[2] Scholars have also analyzed the extent to which constitutional courts have promoted gender equality, or have interpreted constitutions in a gender-sensitive fashion.

For example, scholarship has looked at how constitutional courts have dealt with cases regarding reproductive rights, gender quotas, violence against women, pregnancy, parental leave, discrimination in custody cases and other situations of gender discrimination. In addition, scholars have analyzed the composition of constitutional courts looking at the extent to which women are present or occupy positions of leadership on constitutional benches, have their voices heard or promote women's interests in constitutional adjudication.[3] With the rise of third wave feminism, these inquiries undertook an intersectional perspective analyzing not only gender but also other axes of inequality such as race, ethnicity, class or sexuality.

The question of sexuality, for instance, has proved extremely important in understanding whether and how constitutions enhance men and women's equal citizenship. Sexuality not only touches on issues such as reproductive rights, including abortion and contraception, but is also related to family dynamics, in particular the distribution of gender roles in the private sphere. Hence, women's rights are intrinsically linked with LGBT+ issues. To give an example, the root of women's inequality is often perceived to lie in the attribution of different gender roles to women and men: women are expected to be wives, housekeepers and carers in the private sphere, while men are expected to take on the role of breadwinners and undertake work in the public sphere. This is why the "traditional family", based on the mentioned gender roles, was seen to be under threat when the topic of decriminalizing sexual relationships between individuals of the same sex and, later, the question of same-sex unions and marriage, came up. That groups attacking women's rights generally also oppose LGBT+ rights, and that studies on gender rights evaluate both women and LGBT+ matters, is therefore no coincidence.

Different studies on the topic of "Gender and Constitutionalism" started emerging quite recently in Romania as well. These studies looked at gender issues in the constitution and legislation of Romania,[4] at issues of women and constitution-making in the country,[5] as well as at the case law of the Constitutional Court of Romania ("CCR", "the Court").[6] Additionally, topics such as gender and sexuality that had not been issues of systematic or strategic contestation and debate on the constitutional front in Romania for a very long time after 1989, have begun to be intensely discussed from a constitutional point of view in recent years. For example, in 2015, a citizens' initiative was launched to review the Romanian Constitution and define marriage as between a man and a woman. The initiative gave rise

to intense debate spanning about three years. During this period, it passed two constitutional reviews by the Constitutional Court, a qualified majority vote of 2/3 in both chambers of Parliament and was put to a national referendum. The initiative was ultimately unsuccessful for not reaching the required participation quorum at the referendum. However, it sparked important discussions on whether the constitution should define marriage in gender neutral terms and whether or not it should offer protection to nontraditional families. Moreover, in 2015, the Constitutional Court had to decide on whether the non-recognition of same-sex marriages contracted abroad that could restrain freedom of movement within the European Union would be constitutional or not. This case was seriously debated at societal level in parallel with the initiative to review the constitution until a decision of the Constitutional Court was rendered in 2018.[7] Other debates on gender and sexuality have recently taken place before the Constitutional Court on the topic of sex education in schools,[8] and on banning gender studies and gender perspectives in education and research more broadly.[9] The latter in particular offered the Court the opportunity to decide on the meaning of "gender" under the Romanian Constitution, and its implications for women and LGBT+ rights.

This working paper aims to scrutinize the 1991 Constitution from the perspective of gender and sexuality. To contextualize the analysis, in Section 2, the paper first covers the status of gender and sexuality in the previous constitutions of Romania. Subsequently, in Section 3, the paper moves on to questions of gender and sexuality under Romania's current Constitution from its drafting in 1990 until July 2021, the time of writing. This section first examines how women's rights were framed in the 1991 Constitution, and the extent to which women have been active actors in constitution-making in post-communist Romania (Sub-section 3.1.). The section then moves on to discuss the gender equality case law of the Constitutional Court of Romania and briefly explores the question of women on the bench of the CCR (Sub-section 3.2.). Finally, Section 3 analyses the question of homosexuality and same-sex unions under the 1991 Constitution (Sub-section 3.3.). In Section 4, the paper draws the overall conclusions of the analysis.

2. Gender, Sexuality and Constitutionalism in Romania before 1989

Before 1989, six constitutions were adopted in Romania. Three of these constitutions have been adopted in 1866, 1923 and 1938 respectively, in which period Romania was ruled by the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty. The other three constitutions were adopted in 1948, 1952 and 1965 respectively, during the communist regime.

From 1938 until 2001, homosexuality had been criminalized in Romania.[10] Unsurprisingly, therefore, none of the pre-1989 constitutions contained any protections for rainbow families. As regards women's rights, the situation of the first three constitutions during the rule of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringens differed greatly from the situation of the communist constitutions. As to be expected, the latter were much more progressive in terms of women's rights than the former.

All three constitutions of 1866, 1923 and 1938 denied women full equal rights, excluding them from succession to the throne[11] and enjoyment of full political rights. Until the 1923 Constitution, women were also denied equal civil rights to men.[12] With respect to political rights, after the adoption of the 1923 Constitution, *only* a few categories of women received the right to vote and to be elected and *only* in and to county and local councils.[13] Furthermore, the 1938 Constitution may have granted women the right to be elected into the Senate,[14] yet it once again *only* gave the right to vote to women who fulfilled certain stringent conditions.[15]

It was only with the coming into power of the communists and the adoption of the communist constitutions, that women in Romania received full political,[16] as well as other rights – at least on paper. In 1946, Romania's first Communist Government granted women equal voting rights.[17] In 1948, communist activist Ana Pauker became the first woman Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, and of the modern world. Article 18 of the 1948 Constitution also explicitly mentioned that all citizens – regardless of sex, among other criteria – had an equal right to vote in and be elected to State institutions. Furthermore, Article 21 of the 1948 Constitution granted women equal rights with men in the areas of state affairs and politics, in economy, society, culture, as well as in matters of private law. Article 21 also guaranteed women equal pay for equal work. To these, Article 83 of the 1952 Constitution added the protection of women's equal rights with men regarding "work, wage,

rest, social security and education." In addition, Article 83 of the 1952 Constitution expressed the state's full commitment to protect "the interests of mother and child", to provide "aid to mothers with many children and single mothers, [and] paid leave for pregnant women," as well as to arrange "maternity hospitals, nurseries and children's homes." Article 86 of the 1952 Constitution also granted the right to assembly in women's organizations. Moreover, in addition to these gender equality provisions, the 1965 Constitution explicitly mentioned the principle of equality of rights (to be enjoyed without discrimination based on sex) in Article 17, mandated ordinary legislation to establish "special measures to protect women's work" in Article 18, and included the President of the Women's Council (i.e., a national women's organization under the control of the Communist Party) as *de iure* member of the Council of Ministers (i.e., the Government of the time) through Article 80.

These generous constitutional guarantees were accompanied by different social changes in the status of women. Women were pushed to work shoulder to shoulder with men in the socialist field of production, thus having access to the public sphere. In addition, the communist regime adopted a quota system in the 1970s to ensure increased participation of women in politics and other leadership positions.[18] However, although these changes might be perceived to have been progressive in comparison to women's situation in Western countries in the same period, the communist regime failed to fully emancipate women. Not only were women obliged to take paid employment outside the house, but they were also still expected to perform the tasks that were traditionally assigned to them in the private sphere, namely household chores and caretaking. In communist Romania, women, unlike men, had to perform double work, in the public sphere of communist production as well as in private sphere of human reproduction.[19] In addition, the promotion of women in communist politics was a matter of tokenism aiming to show communism's commitment to women's emancipation.[20] Like in other Eastern European countries, many women who entered politics did not have a real say. In this sense, mention should be made of the fact that the highest ranks of the Communist Party, where the power actually resided, were still dominated by men.[21] Arguably, Elena Ceaușescu was the exception to this rule. She managed to occupy some of the most important positions in the Communist Party and was perceived to rule the country together with President Nicolae Ceaușescu, her husband.[22] Yet Elena Ceaușescu was not perceived as a positive example by the people; on the contrary,

she was blamed for all the evils committed by her husband and the Communist Party. Consequently, the presence of women in politics began to be associated with the negative image of Elena Ceaușescu and other women who were promoted by the Communist Party. After 1989, this association led to the rejection of women from politics and arguably to a refusal to enter into politics by women themselves.[23]

The most drastic restriction of women's rights during Romanian communism was however related to the pro-natalist policies of Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was the president of Romania between 1965 and 1989. Among others, these policies included one of the harshest anti-abortion laws in the history of Europe (adopted in 1966),[24] a general lack of contraceptive means, forced gynecological checkups at the workplace disguised as regular medical checkups, as well as a curtailment of the conditions under which a divorce could be obtained.[25] This restriction of women's reproductive autonomy had devastating effects on not only women's equality and life plans, but also their health, liberty and even survival. Until 1989, when the anti-abortion law was repealed, an estimated 10,000 women died due to illegal abortions, 2,000 women were imprisoned and many others suffered serious health consequences for the same reason. This intrusion into the private life of women by the state remains a black page in Romanian history. Unsurprisingly, one of the first measures taken after the outbreak of the Romanian revolution was to legalize abortion on request,[26] and Ceausescu's legacy of repressing women's reproductive rights has rendered any attempt to restrain abortion after 1989 unsuccessful.

3. Gender, Sexuality and Constitutionalism in Post-1989 Romania

3.1. Women and the 1991 Constitution

The current Romanian Constitution dates from 1991, having been drafted after the fall of communism in December 1989. Since then, several attempts to review the Constitution have been made, but only one of them was successful. The latter took place in 2003 when the review was needed to prepare Romania for EU and NATO accession. In a paper coauthored with Silvia Șuteu, we analyzed women's participation in and impact on the most important moments of constitution-drafting and change

after 1989.[27] Overall, we found that very few women participated in the processes of constitution-making in Romania until very recently, when constitutional review was triggered by a citizens' initiative originating in civil society. In addition, we concluded that women's interests and gender equality have rarely been a priority for constitution-makers. Just to give an example, when the current Romanian Constitution was drafted (between 1990-1991), a mere 4.9 percent of the Constitutional Assembly (i.e., the first democratically elected Parliament) were women and none have been part of the *Commission for Elaborating the Project of the Romanian Constitution*, the body that has *de facto* drafted most of the constitutional text.[28] In addition, we showed that the formulation of the gender provisions in the 1991 Constitution reflects a gender conservative mindset, this probably being the result of historical context.[29]

Annex I of this paper contains a list of the gender provisions of the 1991 Constitution, and any modification they underwent after the 2003 constitutional review. In a nutshell, Articles 4 and 16 of the 1991 Constitution guaranteed all citizens equality before the law. In Article 26(2), the Constitution further established the right to freely dispose of one's own body, which could cover issues such as abortion or sex change.[30] Along similar lines to communist laws, Article 33 referred to the protection of maternity,[31] Article 43 granted "citizens" the right to paid maternity leave,[32] while Article 38 protected women's right to special working conditions as well as the right to equal pay for equal work.[33] The protection of men in their capacity as fathers was not mentioned in the constitutional text, a sign that constitution-makers saw childcare as a woman's task. Moreover, Article 52 imposed mandatory military service on men, but not on women. This requirement was later abolished in the 2003 constitutional review. At that stage, a new paragraph was introduced in Article 16 to provide for equal opportunities to occupy "public, civil, or military positions or dignities" for women.

An article that was subject of debate was Article 44(1) (which became Article 48 at the 2003 constitutional review). This article stipulated equality between spouses, stating that "the family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses, their full equality, as well as the right and duty of the parents to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of their children." When this article was drafted, one of the few women-members of the Constituent Assembly unsuccessfully proposed to modify its wording so to "add that, apart from being based on the full equality of the spouses, the family is also based on the right to decide

freely on its size."[34] This was meant to guarantee reproductive rights, so as to avoid the adoption of any pro-natalist policy similar to Ceaușescu's. Furthermore, as is shown in sub-section 3.3., this article was subject to other review proposals, including a citizens' initiative that (unsuccessfully) aimed to change its text to replace the term "spouses" with the syntagm "a man and a woman" so as to prevent the legalization of same-sex marriage, and ensure that "gender stereotypes are constitutionally enshrined."[35]

This latter citizens' initiative to review the Constitution was launched in 2015, and was particularly important for women's participation in constitution-making. As mentioned, in the preceding constitutional moments, not many women had been present or visible.[36] This changed when it was citizens initiating the constitutional review. Over the three years during which the citizens' initiative was under examination, women and women's groups from both sides of the debate – supporting or opposing the proposal to define marriage in heterosexual terms – have been highly involved in the campaign around amending the Romanian Constitution.[37] As I and Silvia Șuteu have explained, this may have had to do with the fact that women are better represented in civil society (civil society being at the core of launching and campaigning for and against the citizen's initiative).[38]

Even if the 2015 citizens' initiative was meant to hinder gender equality, it remains crucial from the perspective of women's involvement in constitution-making. Not only were women active actors in the process of constitutional review, but women's groups also built alliances among themselves as well as with LGBT+ and other human rights groups to counter attacks on gender equality, learning about the Constitution and its potential to restrict or advance women's rights.[39] This may explain why women's groups and their allies have been extremely quick and effective in engaging with constitutional actors, including the Constitutional Court, in 2020 when a ban on gender education and research was under consideration, as further explained in the next section of the paper. This might have also prepared women's groups to further consider the Constitution and the Constitutional Court as avenues to promote their interests.

3.2. Women, Gender and the CCR

The Romanian Constitutional Court was established by the 1991 Constitution and became operational in 1992. The Court was meant to

act as "the guarantor for the supremacy of the Constitution."[40] It has an important function in interpreting the fundamental rights laid down in the Constitution, including rights touching upon gender issues. In this sense, the Court can scrutinize the compatibility of laws and bills with the Constitution. However, it is important to mention that the Constitutional Court neither stands as an appeal court nor can it decide on the outcome of a case. Moreover, individuals have no direct access to the Constitutional Court.

There are two ways in which the Court could come to decide on the constitutionality of a bill or a law. On one hand, the Court could check the constitutionality of a bill after its adoption by Parliament, but before its promulgation by the President. This is the so called abstract or *a priori* review, or in Romanian "objection of constitutionality" (Ro. "obiecție de neconstituționalitate").[41] This could be requested "by the President of Romania, one of the presidents of the two Chambers [of Parliament], the Government, the High Court of Cassation and Justice, the Advocate of the People, a number of at least 50 deputies or at least 25 senators, […] [and could be initiated] *ex officio*, on initiatives to revise the Constitution."[42] On the other hand, a request to verify the constitutionality of a piece of legislation could be made during a trial, that is, after its adoption. This is known as concrete or *a posteriori* review, or in Romanian "referral of constitutionality" (Ro. "excepție de neconstituționalitate"). In this case, the request could be referred to the CCR *ex officio* by the court before which the trial is pending, by one of the parties to the trial or by the prosecutor.[43] The Ombudsman, an institution specialized in protecting fundamental rights in Romania, is the only institution to date that can ask the Court to check the constitutionality of a legal norm after its entering into force. However, as Bianca Selejan-Guțan shows, the Ombudsman has rarely used this power and, to the best of the author's knowledge, never in a case on gender or sexuality.[44]

Since it started functioning until today, the CCR has adjudicated on a series of important matters related to gender and women's rights. For example, the CCR has looked at the issue of abortion in the context of surrogacy and assisted reproduction; the question of extending parental leave to men in the military; the matter of equalizing the pensioning age for men and women; the possibility of a mother to challenge the legal presumption of paternity; the discrimination of fathers with regard to custody claims; the unconstitutionality of the more lenient penal sanctions for women; the unconstitutionality of granting full legal capacity to married

women under the age of 18, but not to married men of the same age; pregnancy discrimination; violence against women and other topics. Annex II of this working paper contains a list of all the relevant gender and sexuality cases of the CCR that I could identify. The list does not claim to be exhaustive due to the difficulty of researching in the database of the CCR which does not allow to sort decisions according to their subject-matter or the article of the Constitution that was invoked in the case.[45]

Looking holistically at the cases adjudicated by the CCR it cannot be claimed that the Court has developed a comprehensive or far reaching doctrine on gender equality.[46] However, the Court has developed a few important principles in this area. For example, on a number of occasions, the Court has held that affirmative action is permissible under the Romanian Constitution.[47] Accordingly, it would not be a stretch to say that possible measures, such as gender quotas in politics, would be constitutional in the Romanian context. In addition, the Court has previously established that sex and gender are different concepts and that gender roles and stereotypes lie at the foundation of gender discrimination. This is extremely important given that the notion of gender as a social construct is currently strongly contested in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, in 2018, the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria ("CCB") has declared the ratification of the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* – also known as the Istanbul Convention – unconstitutional due to its definition of "gender" as being a social construct differing from biological sex.[48] More precisely, the CCB maintained that:

> The [Bulgarian] Constitution and the whole of Bulgarian legislation is based on a binary understanding of the existence of the human species … The social dimension of sex is unambiguously perceived in interaction with the biological one (Art 47(2) Bulgarian Constitution [on special protection to mothers]). In that constitutional provision, the biological sex of "a woman" is connected with her social role—"mother," "giving birth," and "obstetric care." In short, the term "sex" is used by the constitution-maker as a unity of the biologically determined and the socially constructed.[49]

In other words, the CCB endorsed gender essentialism assigning certain roles to men and women by virtue of their biological sex (for example the roles of mothers and caretakers to women). The CCR has dealt with the question of the difference between biological sex and gender in cases

related to the different pensioning age for men and women, and in a case on granting parental leave to men in the military.[50] Yet CCR's most elaborate analysis on this topic was performed in Decision 907/2020 declaring a bill meant to ban gender education and research in Romania unconstitutional.[51] In Decision 907/2020, the CCR stated clearly that:

> the concept of "gender" has a wider scope than that of "sex"/sexuality in a strict biological sense, since it incorporates complex elements of a psychosocial nature. Thus, while the concept of "sex" refers to the biological characteristics which mark the differences between men and women, the concept of "gender" refers to a set of psychological and sociocultural traits. The latter incorporates elements of one's social identity, which change according to the evolution of society and the continuous reassessment of the interpretation of the principle of sex equality and non-discrimination… The Romanian State has enshrined this vision/approach in its legislation undertaking essentially to combat gender stereotypes and enforce in an effective manner the principle of equality and non-discrimination.[52]

The CCR reached the aforementioned conclusion on the definition of "gender" not only by looking at the national regulation of transsexuality, homosexuality and equality between men and women and its previous case-law, but also at applicable European norms.[53] This is in line with the Court's approach in other gender equality cases where the CCR has also had recourse to European standards on gender equality. In this context, developments at the European level (particularly at the EU and Council of Europe/European Court of Human Rights level) will likely play a key role in the manner in which gender equality will be further conceptualized by the CCR.

It is important to note that a significant number of *amicus curiae* briefs were sent to the Court to support its analysis in Decision 907/2020. Remarkably, out of the twelve amicus briefs sent to the Court, eight came from organizations and individuals interested in promoting gender and sexual equality in Romania. These organizations and individuals possibly learned about the value of engaging with the Constitutional Court from the previous debates on the review of the Romanian Constitution to define marriage in heterosexual terms. This "participatory turn" on gender matters before the CCR could be seen as a positive development in Romania that has the potential to bring about a more in-depth conversation on gender and the constitution in the country.

An explanation for the progressive holding of the CCR in Decision 907/2020 might have to do with the composition of the bench. At the time when Decision 907/2020 was rendered, three of the nine judges sitting on the bench were women, amounting to 30 percent.[54] One of them, Judge Simina Tănăsescu, is a reputable scholar who has worked extensively on equality in Romanian Law,[55] and is also the co-author of one of the few studies on gender equality under the Romanian Constitution.[56] Further research into the impact of female judges on the decisions of the CCR would be interesting. To the author's knowledge, no such research exists yet. In addition, no research has been done to explain the overall underrepresentation, and the experiences of the few women on the bench of the CCR, despite the importance of such research.

For the first 12 years of its existence, the Court had no woman on the bench. It is only in 2004 that the Court got its first female judge, namely Ms Aspazia Cojocaru. The second woman to be nominated as a constitutional judge was Ms. Iulia Anotnella Motoc, in 2010. Altogether, out of the 32 judges who have previously sat on the bench of the CCR, only 3 have been women, which is barely three percent. Moreover, the Court has never had a female president.[57]

The underrepresentation of women on the CCR bench might seem puzzling given the overall feminization of the judiciary in Romania. Romania is one of the countries with most female judges in Europe, women making up a majority of judges, including on the bench of the High Court of Cassation and Justice and as presidents of courts.[58] The reason for the underrepresentation of women on the bench of the Constitutional Court might be related to the nomination procedure of the judges. While regular judges in Romania are selected based on a competitive examination, constitutional judges are nominated through a political process by the two chambers of Parliament and the Romanian President. Given the political influence in the selection of constitutional judges, the underrepresentation of women on the bench of the Constitutional Court might have to do with the equally serious underrepresentation of women in Romanian politics.[59] Yet further research is needed to duly grasp this matter.

3.3. Sexuality and the 1991 Constitution

After 1989, Romania upheld the communist Criminal Code adopted in 1968, and many of its provisions. Among these was Article 200 that criminalized homosexuality and the act of "inciting or encouraging"

a person to practice homosexuality.[60] As a result, LGBT+ groups were illegal in Romania until 2001 (when Article 200 was repealed) and not much activism could take place on LGBT+ rights. However, in the 1990s, international human rights organizations began to put constant pressure on Romania to decriminalize homosexuality. For example, the Council of Europe ("CoE") repeatedly insisted that homosexuality should be decriminalized as Romania had become one of its member states in 1993 and Article 200 was seen at odds with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR"), which is the CoE's cornerstone document.[61]

Based on the requirements imposed on Romania under the ECHR, in 1994, the CCR declared Article 200 unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalized sexual relationships between consenting adults that took place in private and did not cause public scandal.[62] Yet as Scott Long reported, the definitions of "public" and "public scandal" were so broad that they could not make an important difference in practice.[63] It was only in 2001 that Romania decriminalized homosexuality under pressure of the EU accession.

Given that the 1991 Constitution was drafted at a time when homosexuality was criminalized in Romania, constitution-makers did not have LGBT+ rights in mind. However, some of the provisions of the Constitution are extremely relevant for LGBT+ individuals and same-sex couples. Article 4 refers to the principle of equality and then enumerates some grounds on which citizens should not be discriminated against. The Constitution does not refer to "sexual orientation" as a ground of discrimination, such protection existing only in the regular legislation.[64] An attempt to include "sexual orientation" in the constitutional text was made in 2013 when the Constitution was under review. Nonetheless the parliamentary committee in charge of preparing a draft for the review of the Constitution rejected the proposal despite protests from civil society.[65] Moreover, the process of constitutional review has failed at that time.

Another relevant article of the Romanian Constitution for LGBT+ persons is Article 26 on "personal and family privacy." In 1994, the CCR interpreted this Article in light of the ECHR so as to hold that criminalizing homosexuality when this does not cause "public scandal" is unconstitutional as explained above. Twenty-four years later, the CCR also interpreted Article 26 in view of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union ("CJEU") so to protect the private and family life of same-sex couples.[66] This happened

in the context of the *Coman* case that concerned granting residence rights to same-sex spouses of EU citizens willing to move to Romania by exercising their right to free movement within the EU. Adjudicated by the CCR between 2015 and 2018, the *Coman* case is the most important strategic litigation case on gender and sexuality that has ever reached the CCR, giving rise to important debates on LGBT+ rights in society. In addition, in this case the CCR also sent a preliminary question to the CJEU for the first time in its history.

Article 48 of the Constitution referring to "family" is another important provision for same-sex couples. Its first paragraph reads as follows: "The family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses, their full equality, as well as the right and duty of the parents to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of their children."[67] Article 48(1) is formulated in gender neutral terms, which in some interpretations leaves room for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Consequently, conservative actors in Romania have attempted to review Article 48(1) several times so as to replace the term "spouses" with "a man and a woman" and prevent any future legalization of same-sex marriage. None of these attempts have been successful. However, conservative actors did manage to include the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman in the text of the 2009 Civil Code.[68]

A first attempt to review Article 48 of the Constitution was made in 2006 when a group of conservative actors initiated a citizens' initiative towards this end. For a citizens' initiative to be successful, it has to gather the signatures of "at least 500,000 [Romanian] citizens' with the right to vote,"[69] and these citizens "must belong to at least half the number of the counties in the country, and in each of the respective counties or in the Municipality of Bucharest at least 20,000 signatures must be recorded in support of this initiative."[70] The CCR has to ensure that these conditions are met[71] and check "the constitutional character of the legislative proposal that is the object of the initiative."[72] Any proposal of constitutional review that would result "in the suppression of the citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms, or of the safeguards thereof,"[73] will be declared to be unconstitutional by the CCR.

Citizens' initiatives that pass an initial constitutional check by the CCR have to be adopted by both chambers of Parliament (the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies) with a qualified majority (i.e., two thirds of the members of each chamber).[74] If adopted, they have to pass another constitutional review by the CCR.[75] On the reconfirmation of its

constitutionality, the proposal has to be put to a referendum to be finally adopted.[76]

The citizens' initiative in 2006 proposed to include the following phrase in the text of Article 48: "In Romania, polygamy is prohibited and marriage is allowed only between a man and a woman."[77] However, the proposal failed to gather the required number of signatures and was declared unconstitutional by the CCR.[78]

An attempt to define marriage as between a man and a woman in the constitutional text was again made in 2013 when the Constitution was under review to address a series of previous constitutional crises. At that time, the two chambers of Parliament established a Commission for the Review of the Romanian Constitution. Not only did civil society propose to include "sexual orientation" as ground of discrimination in the Constitution (as explained above), but a proposal was also made to define marriage as between a man and a woman in the text of Article 48(1), and to add two paragraphs to Article 48 formulated as follows: "3) Family represents the natural and fundamental element of society and has the right to protection from society and the state; 4) Every child has the right to a mother and a father."[79] Despite these debates on the topic of LGBT+ rights and the definition of marriage, the overall attempt to review the Constitution was unsuccessful at that time. In this context, groups promoting "the traditional family" continued their efforts and in 2015 managed to launch the first successful citizens' initiative to review the Constitution in Romanian history.

At that time, an alliance of conservative actors called "the Coalition for Family" succeeded in gathering (with the help of the Orthodox Church) over 2,500,000 signatures from all over Romania in support of amending Article 48. The initiative was validated by the Constitutional Court[80] *and* passed a 2/3 vote in Parliament. Nevertheless, the initiative ultimately failed to meet the 30 percent participation quorum at the referendum that should have been the last stage in the procedure before the adoption of the amendment. This constitutional moment has been extremely important as LGBT+ and other human rights groups achieved visibility in the public sphere and managed to put forward their agenda for public discussion. They have also built knowledge on the constitutional mechanisms that could threaten but also promote LGBT+ rights. In what way these groups will utilize the experience and know-how that they have gained in this period, remains to be seen.

4. Conclusion

This working paper has analyzed the way in which gender and sexuality have been framed and debated under the 1991 Constitution. The paper showed that Romania had included strong protections of gender equality in its communist constitutions, but that these did not necessarily lead to achieving gender equality on the ground. The Communist regime was never concerned with changing women's role in the family and the private sphere more broadly. This lack of concern of communists for dismantling gender roles in the family could also be inferred from their repression of non-traditional families and the criminalization of homosexuality. The 1991 Constitution did not address this matter either, instead treating women as mothers and omitting to offer protection to men in their quality of fathers.

The paper has also shown that, until very recently, women have not been present in the constitution-making processes in Romania and that gender and sexuality have not been areas of great contestation before the Constitutional Court. This changed in 2015 when the amendment of the constitution was triggered by a citizens' initiative led by civil society, where women are generally better represented. In parallel, the CCR also became the center of debates on gender and sexuality as demonstrated by the *Coman* case on granting residence rights to same-sex couples, as well as by the case on banning gender education and research. The *Coman* case is certainly the most important strategic litigation case on gender and sexuality in Romania to date. It gave rise to important debates in the legal community as well as society. In addition, the attempt to ban gender education and research mobilized gender equality supporters who have promptly intervened before the Romanian President and the Constitutional Court to counter the proposed bill.

These recent developments could be characterized as a "participatory turn" on issues of gender and sexuality in Romanian constitutionalism. They mark the beginning of an era where the Romanian Constitution is seen as an important battleground for gender (in)equality and in which relevant civil society actors as well as society at large are becoming more seriously involved in constitutional debates on gender and sexuality. This represents a departure from the period when these topics were seen as marginal – if not inexistent – on the constitutional front and in which the Constitution was not necessarily perceived as a vehicle for promoting gender and sexual equality. To what extent this "participatory turn" will bring about future improvements in the legal status of women, men and LGBT+ individuals, remains to be seen.

Annex I. Provisions of the 1991 Romanian Constitution Relevant for Gender and Sexuality (as of 15 July 2021)[81]

Provisions of the 1991 Constitution	Provisions after the 2003 review
Article 4 (2) Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, without any discrimination on account of […] sex […]	Idem
Article 16 (1) Citizens are equal before the law and public authorities, without any privilege or discrimination. (2) No one is above the law. (3) Access to a public office or dignity, civil or military, is granted to persons whose citizenship is only and exclusively Romanian, and whose domicile is in Romania.	Review: (3) Access to public, civil, or military positions or dignities may be granted, according to the law, to persons whose citizenship is Romanian and whose domicile is in Romania. The Romanian State shall guarantee equal opportunities for men and women to occupy such positions and dignities.
Article 26 (1) The public authorities shall respect and protect the intimate, family and private life. (2) Any natural person has the right to freely dispose of herself/himself unless by this she/he causes an infringement upon the rights and freedoms of others, on public order or the standards of public morality[82]	Idem

Article 33 (1) The right to the protection of health is guaranteed. (2) The State shall be bound to take measures to ensure public hygiene and health. (3) The organization of the medical care and social security system in case of sickness, accidents, maternity and recovery […] shall be established according to the law.	Becomes Article 34
Article 38 (2) All employees have the right to social protection of labour. The protecting measures concern […] working conditions for women […] (4) On equal work with men, women shall get equal wages.	Becomes Article 41
Article 43 (2) Citizens have the right to […] paid maternity leave […].	Becomes Article 47
Article 44 (1) The Family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses, their full equality, as well as the right and duty of the parents to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of their children.	Becomes Article 48

Article 52 (1) Citizens have the right and duty to defend Romania. (2) The military service is compulsory for all Romanian male citizens aged twenty, except for the cases provided by law. […]	Becomes Article 55 and reads only: (1) Citizens have the right and duty to defend Romania. (2) The terms for doing the military service shall be set up in an organic law.* […] * The requirement that only men had to serve in the military was removed

Annex II. Case-law of the Romanian Constitutional Court on Gender and Sexuality (from the moment it started functioning in 1992 until 15 July 2021)

Decision	Main issue
Decision 81/1994, Appeal Decision 136/1994	Decriminalization homosexuality in private, in case it would not cause "public scandal"
Decision 74/1996 Decision 483/2007	Upholding the illegality of prostitution/ pimping
Decision 107/1995 Decision 27/1996 Decision 888/2006 Decision 191/2008 Decision 1007/2008 Decision 1237/2010 Decision 287/2011 Decision 387/2018	On the (un)equal pensioning age of men and women
Decision 349/2001 Decision 8/2004	The possibility of mothers and other interested persons to challenge the legal presumption of paternity
Decision 453/2003	Discrimination between the father of a child born within wedlock and the father of the child born out of wedlock in challenging the legal presumption of paternity
Decision 90/2005	Extending parental leave to men in the military
Decision 217/2005	The unconstitutionality of granting women under 18 full legal capacity if married, but not to men in the same situation
Decision 418/2005	Assisted reproduction/Abortion

Decision 390/2005 **Decision 538/2005** **Decision 646/2006** **Decision 589/2007** **Decision 806/2007**	Discrimination between the mother and father of a child born during marriage as regards the prescription of the action of contesting the recognition of paternity or the action of denying paternity respectively
Judgement 6/2007	The formal requirements of a citizen's initiative to review Article 48 of the Constitution so as to prohibit polygamy and define marriage as between a man and a woman
Decision 82/2003 **Decision 168/2006** **Decision 411/2006** **Decision 974/2007** **Decision 1023/2007**	The rights and obligations of former spouses and parents as regards children
Decision 1197/2007	The surname one could bear after divorce
Decision 530/2008	Changing the acts of civil status in case of sex reassignment
Decision 782/2009	Equal access to public positions
Decision 1638/2010	The discrimination of fathers regarding custody claims
Decision 423/2007 **Decision 997/2011**	The unconstitutionality of the more lenient penal sanctions for women
Decision 80/2014	The review of the Constitution – the Court refers to the proposal to exclude the definition of "morals and public order" from the text of Article 26 of the Romanian Constitution on the right to personal and family privacy, including the right to one's own body under which the protection of abortion falls
Decision 556/2015	Equal pay for equal work

Decision 580/2016 **Decision 539/2018**	Review of Article 48 of the Constitution on Family, defining marriage as between a man and a woman
Decision 264/2017	Violence in the home, incompatibility of the national legislation with the Istanbul Convention
Decision 534/2018	On the recognition of same-sex marriages contracted abroad (the *Coman* case)
Decision 1/2020	Pregnancy discrimination
Decision 644/2020	Sex education in schools
Decision 907/2020	Banning gender perspectives in education and research

NOTES

1 That is not to say that works on this topic in other languages do not exist. For example, in 2018, a special edition of a French journal published a series of reports on gender and constitutionalism in 21 countries, including Romania. See *Annuaire International de Justice Constitutionnelle*, 34-2018, 2019. Égalité, genre et constitution - Populisme et démocratie, https://www.persee.fr/issue/aijc_0995-3817_2019_num_34_2018 (accessed 1 May 2021).

2 See e.g. Ruth Rubio-Marín, "Women and Participatory Constitutionalism" (2020) 18 *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 233; Ruth Rubio-Marín and Helen Irving, *Women as Constitution-Makers: Case Studies from the New Democratic Era* (Cambridge University Press 2019); Nanako Tamaru and Marie O'Reilly, "How Women Influence Constitution Making After Conflict and Unrest" [2018] Inclusivesecurity.org; Mukabi Kabira, *Time for Harvest: Women and Constitution Making in Kenya* (University of Nairobi Press 2012); Brigitte Mabandla, "Women in South Africa and the Constitution-Making Process", *Women's Rights Human Rights* (Routledge 1995); Martha I Morgan and Monica Maria Alzate Buitrago, "Constitution-Making in a Time of Cholera: Women and the 1991 Colombian Constitution" (1992) 4 *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 353.

3 Helen Irving (ed), *Constitutions and Gender* (Edward Elgar Publishing 2017); Beverley Baines, Daphne Barak-Erez and Tsvi Kahana (eds), *Feminist Constitutionalism: Global Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press 2012); Catharine A MacKinnon, "Gender in Constitutions", *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Constitutional Law* (Oxford University Press 2012); Susan Hoffman Williams (ed), *Constituting Equality: Gender Equality and Comparative Constitutional Law* (Cambridge University Press 2009); Helen Irving, *Gender and the Constitution: Equity and Agency in Comparative Constitutional Design* (Cambridge University Press 2008); Beverley Baines and Ruth Rubio-Marín (eds), *The Gender of Constitutional Jurisprudence* (Cambridge University Press 2004).

4 Elena-Simina Tănăsescu and Ionela Băluță, "Romania (Roumanie)" (2019) 34 *Annuaire international de justice constitutionnelle* 391.

5 Elena Brodeală and Silvia Șuteu, "Women and Constitution-Making in Post-Communist Romania" in Helen Irving and Ruth Rubio-Marín (eds), *Women as Constitution Makers: Case Studies from the New Democratic* (Cambridge University Press 2019).

6 Elena Brodeală, "The Changing Status of Women as Others in the Romanian Constitution" (2017) *11 Vienna Journal on International Constitutional Law* 541.

7 CCR Decision 534/2018.

8 CCR Decision 644/2020.

9 CCR Decision 907/2020.

10   Homosexuality had been criminalized in Romania under the authoritarian dictatorship of King Carol II (see Article 431 of Romania's second Penal Code of 1936). The criminalization was maintained during the communist regime through Article 200 of the 1968 Penal Code that was finally repealed in 2001 under pressure of EU accession. On Article 431 of the 1936 Penal Code, see Scott Long, "Public Scandals: Sexual Orientation and Criminal Law in Romania" (Human Rights Watch 1998) 6–16 http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7e70.html. On the decriminalization of homosexuality in Romania, see Carl Franklin Stychin, "Ch. 6 "We Want to Join Europe, Not Sodom": Sexuality and European Union Accession in Romania", *Governing Sexuality: The Changing Politics of Citizenship and Law Reform* (Hart Publishing 2003); Voichita Nachescu, "Hierarchies of Difference: National Identity, Gay and Lesbian Rights and the Church in Postcommunist Romania" in Aleksandar Štulhofer and Theo Sandfort (eds), *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia* (Haworth Press 2005); Sînziana Cârstocea, "Romania-From Closet to Liberation. Elements for a Socio-Political History of Homosexual Claims in a Post-Communist Society (La Roumanie-Du Placard à La Libération. Eléments Pour Une Histoire Socio-Politique Des Revendications Homosexuelles Dans Une Société Postcommuniste)" (Université Libre de Bruxelles 2010); Marius Mite, "Documentary: The Incrimination and Dezincrimination of Homosexuality. Article 200 of the Romanian Criminal Code. (Documentar. Incriminarea Și Dezincriminarea Homosexualității. Articolul 200 Din Codul Penal Românesc)" [2016] *Noua Revistă de Drepturile Omului* 51.

11   See Article 82 of the 1866 Constitution, Article 77 of the 1923 Constitution and Article 34 of the 1938 Constitution.

12   Article 6 of the 1923 Constitution explicitly stated that "women's civil rights are to be established on the basis of full equality between the sexes."

13   See Article 108 of the 1923 Constitution and Article 375 of Law 167/1929.

14   See Articles 61 and 63 of the 1938 Constitution.

15   See Articles 61 and 62 of the 1938 Constitution.

16   For more on the constitutional protection of women's electoral rights in Romania, see Doina Bordeianu, "The Constitutinal Evolution of Women's Electoral Rights in Romania (Evoluția Constituțională a Drepturilor Electorale Ale Femeilor în România)" [2010] *Sfera Politicii (The Sphere of Politics)* 53.

17   Luciana Marioara Jinga, *Gender and Representation in Communist Romania: 1944-1989 (Gen și Reprezentare în România Comunistă: 1944-1989)* (Polirom 2015) 208. On the achievement of women's suffrage in Romania, see Roxana Cheșchebec, "The Achievement of Female Suffrage in Romania" in Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz and Ruth Rubio-Marín (eds), *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe: Voting to Become Citizens* (Brill 2012).

18   See Mary Ellen Fischer, "Women in Romanian Politics: Elena Ceaușescu, Pronatalism, and the Promotion of Women" in Sharon L Wolchik and Alfred

G Meyer (eds), *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe* (Duke University Press 1985) 125–129; Jinga (n 17) 217–221.

19 See William Moskoff, "The Problem of the 'Double Burden' in Romania", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 23.1–2 (1982), 79–88. The problem of the double burden was not characteristic only of communist Romania, but was widespread in the entire communist space in Eastern Europe. See Chris Corrin, *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (Scarlet Press, 1992).

20 Fischer (n 18) 131.

21 Mira Janova and Mariette Sineau, "Women's Participation in Political Power in Europe" (1992) 15 *Women's Studies International Forum* 115, 117, 122.

22 For more on the role of Elena Ceaușescu in communist Romania, see Cristina Liana Olteanu, "The Cult of Elena Ceaușescu in the 1980s (Cultul Elenei Ceaușescu în Anii '80)" in Alin Ciupala (ed), *About Women and Their History in Romania (Despre Femei și Istoria lor în România)* (Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti 2004); Jill Massino, "Women's Anonymity in the Aesthetics of Ceaușescu's Romania (Anonimatul Femeii în Estetica României Ceaușiste)" in Alin Ciupala (ed), *About Women and Their History in Romania (Despre Femei și Istoria lor în România)* (Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti 2004) 151–156; Vasile Vese, "The Condition of Women in Romania during the Communist Period" in Ann Katherine Isaacs (ed), *Political Systems and Definitions of Gender Roles* (Edizioni Plus: Universitá di Pisa 2001) 269–272; Catherine Lovatt, "The Legacy of Elena Ceaușescu" (1999) 1 *Central Europe Review* http://www.ce-review.org/99/3/women_lovatt3.html (accessed 2 June 2021); Fischer (n 18).

23 For more on this topic, see also Brodeală and Șuteu (n 5) 87–89; 96–98.

24 Decree 770/1966.

25 For more on Ceaușescu's pronatalist policy, see Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (University of California Press 1998).

26 See Decree 1/1989.

27 Brodeală and Șuteu (n 5).

28 ibid 102–104.

29 ibid 105–108.

30 The article reads as follows: "Any natural person has the right to freely dispose of herself/himself unless by this she/he causes an infringement upon the rights and freedoms of others, on public order or the standards of public morality." Official translation from the website of the Romanian Presidency https://www.presidency.ro/en/the-constitution-of-romania (accessed 7 July 2021). The official translation only uses the masculine pronouns; the feminine is the author's addition.

31 Article 33 became Article 34 after the 2003 constitutional review.

32   Article 43 became Article 46 after the 2003 constitutional review.

33   Article 38 became Article 41 after the 2003 constitutional review.

34   Brodeală and Șuteu (n 5) 106.

35   "Gheorghiu (Civic Platform Together): Gender Ideology has Become a State Policy in Romania [Gheorghiu (Platforma Civică Împreună): Ideologia de gen a devenit în România politică de stat]" *AGERPRES* (3 September 2018) http://www.agerpres.ro/social/2018/09/03/gheorghiu-platforma-civica-impreuna-ideologia-de-gen-a-devenit-in-romania-politica-de-stat--169742.

36   Brodeală and Șuteu (n 5) 94–126.

37   ibid 129–130, 134–138.

38   ibid 137.

39   ibid 138.

40   Article 142 of the Constitution.

41   Bianca Selejan-Guțan, *The Constitution of Romania: A Contextual Analysis* (Hart Publishing 2016) 172.

42   According to Article 146(a) of the Constitution.

43   Selejan-Guțan (n 41) 173.

44   ibid 174.

45   Moreover, no summaries of decisions are provided. As a result, the search process is extremely time-consuming unless the researcher knows the exact decision to look for. The Case Law Database of Court can be accessed here: https://www.ccr.ro/ccrSearch/MainSearch/SearchForm.aspx (in Romanian only).

46   The fact that one cannot speak about a comprehensive doctrine on gender equality of the CCR might be explained by different factors. Firstly, it might be explained by the drafting style of the CCR that is often characterized by formalism and brevity. For example, it is not uncommon that the gender-relevant issues in CCR's decisions are analyzed in just one or a few paragraphs. In addition, "law and society" or teleological arguments appear rarely, if ever in the CCR case-law and oftentimes the reasoning of the Court in gender equality cases remains underdeveloped. This makes the analysis of the case law beyond a black-letter inquiry rather difficult. Another factor might have to do with the fact that many of the cases that reached the Court were not the product of strategic litigation or an attempt to bring about a conversation on gender equality in Romania through litigation. To the best of my knowledge most of the cases I found (with some exceptions) did not receive much public attention and were not subject of serious debate in society. Hence one could argue that no actors had been present to pressure the Court to be more detailed in its reasoning on the matter of gender equality as has lately been the case as regards the issue of banning gender education and research (see Decision 907/2020). N.B. Strategic litigation does not have a serious or long tradition in Romania or in Eastern Europe more generally. See e.g. James Goldston, "Public Interest Litigation in Central and Eastern

Europe: Roots, Prospects, and Challenges" (2006) 28 *Human Rights Quarterly* 492; Edwin Rekosh, "Who Defines the Public Interest - Public Interest Law Strategies in Central and Eastern Europe" (2005) 2 *Sur - International Journal of Human Rights* 167.

47   See for example CCR Decision 27/1996.

48   See more on this topic in Ruzha Smilova, "The Ideological Turn in Bulgarian Constitutional Discourse. The Rise Against 'Genders'" in András Sajó and Renáta Uitz (eds), *Critical Essays on Human Rights Criticism* (Eleven International Publishing 2020).

49   Quote and translation taken from Barbara Havelková, "The Struggle for Social Constructivism in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe" (2020) 18 *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 434, 438.

50   See the cases in Annex II and Brodeală (n 6) 554–559.

51   More precisely, the bill aimed to amend Article 7 of the National Education Law banning "activities aimed at spreading gender identity theory or opinion" in any kind of educational setting. The "gender identity theory or opinion" was defined as "the theory or opinion according to which gender is a concept that is different from the biological sex and that the two are not always the same." For a more detailed commentary of this decision, see Elena Brodeală and Georgiana Epure, "Nature v. Nurture: 'Sex' and 'Gender' before the Romanian Constitutional Court: A Critical Analysis of Decision 907/2020 on The Unconstitutionality of Banning Gender Perspectives in Education and Research", (2021) 17 European Constitutional Law Review 724.

52   Paragraph 64. Translation from ibid 733 – 734.

53   Paras. 69 – 76.

54   See the CCR website: https://www.ccr.ro/judecatori/ (accessed 2 July 2021).

55   See e.g. Elena Simina Tănăsescu, *The Principle of Equality in Romanian Law (Principiul Egalității în Dreptul Românesc)* (All Beck 1999).

56   See Tănăsescu and Băluță (n 4).

57   Based on the data available on the website of the CCR: https://www.ccr.ro/fostii-judecatori/ (accessed 2 July 2021).

58   See Yvonne Galligan and others, "Mapping the Representation of Women and Men in Legal Professions Across the EU" (Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs, EU 2017) 102–114.

59   For example, from 1989 until 2020, the representation of women in the Romanian Parliament did not exceed 19 percent. See Tănăsescu and Băluță (n 4) 408. Currently (July 2021), the representation of women in the Romanian Parliament is only 17 percent.

60   Article 200 read as follows:

> *(1) The sexual relations between persons of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment from 1 to 7 years.*
> *(2) The act in paragraph 1 committed against a minor, on a person unable to defend himself/herself or to express his/her consent, or*

> *through coercion, shall be punished with imprisonment from 2 to 7 years.*
>
> *(3) If the act in paragraph 2 results in serious bodily injury or health problems, the punishment is imprisonment from 3 to 10 years, and if it results in the death or suicide of the victim, the penalty is imprisonment from 7 to 15 years.*
>
> *(4) Inciting or encouraging a person to practice the act referred to in paragraph 1 shall be punished with imprisonment from 1 to 5 years.*

[60] My translation.

[61] Michael Jose Torra, "Gay Rights after the Iron Curtain" (1998) 22 *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 73, 79–80.

[62] CCR Decision 81/1994 and Decision 136/1994.

[63] Long (n 10).

[64] See Government Ordinance 137/2000 Regarding the Prevention and Sanctioning of all Forms of Discrimination.

[65] See the open letter by various civil society organizations, "Sexual Orientation Should Remain a Protected Ground in the Romanian Constitution!" (13 June 2013) https://accept-romania.ro/sexual-orientation-should-remain-a-protected-ground-in-the-romanian-constitution/ (accessed 11 July 2021).

[66] See CCR Decision 534/2018, paragraph 41.

[67] Official translation.

[68] More precisely, Article 258 of the 2009 Civil Code on "family" reads: "(1) The family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses, their full equality, as well as the right and duty of the parents to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of their children. … (4) Within the meaning of this Code, spouses should be a man and a woman united by marriage." Moreover, Article 259 referring to marriage reads as follows: "(1) Marriage is the freely consented union between a man and a woman, concluded according to the law. (2) Men and women have the right to marry with the aim of starting a family. […]". My translation.

[69] Article 150(1) of the Constitution.

[70] Article 150 (2) of the Constitution.

[71] Article 7 (1) c of Law 189/1999 regarding the Exercise of the Legislative Initiative by Citizens.

[72] Article 7 (1) a of Law 189/1999.

[73] Article 152 (2) of Constitution. Official translation.

[74] Article 151(1) of the Constitution.

[75] Article 7 (5) of Law 189/1999. According to Article 146 a), the Constitutional Court shall adjudicate *ex officio* on the constitutionality of initiatives to revise the Constitution.

[76] More precisely, Article 150 (3) of the Constitution requires that the referendum should take place "within 30 days of the date of passing the

draft or proposal of revision." To be valid, at least 30 percent of the citizens subscribed on the permanent electoral lists should vote in the referendum. See Article 5(2) of Law 3/2000 on referendum.

77 See Legislative Proposal no. 782 of 2 June 2006 regarding the constitutional review, published in the Official Gazette no. 536 of 21 June 2006 (Proiect de lege nr. 782 din 2 iunie 2006, publicat în Monitorul Oficial nr. 536 din 21 iunie 2006), http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/72851 (accessed 10 July 2021). My translation.

78 CCR Judgement 6/2007, https://idrept.ro/EmbedView.aspx?EmbedId=70b28861-85b3-4e21-811e-5fa787c88eec (accessed 11 July 2021).

79 The proposal was made by the Alliance of Romania's Families (Alianța Familiilor din România), the group that was involved in the 2006 citizen's initiative with the same scope. For more details, see http://www.variantacojocaru.ro/ConstitutiaPoporului/propuneri/propunere-Alianta-Familiilor-din-Romania.pdf (accessed 11 July 2021).

80 The core of the CCR's reasoning is encapsulated in one of the paragraphs of the first out of the two decisions that it delivered on the initiative:

"Examining the modification of Article 48(1) proposed by the initiators of the revision, the Court concludes that this cannot remove, eliminate or annul the institution of marriage … . Replacing the phrase "between spouses" with "between a man and a woman" only offers a clarification on the exercise of the fundamental right to marriage, in the sense of expressly stating that this can be concluded only between partners of different biological sexes, this being the original meaning of the [constitutional] text. In 1991, when the Constitution was adopted, marriage in Romania was regarded in its traditional understanding of a union between one man and one woman. This idea is supported by the subsequent evolution of family law in Romania, as well as by the systematic interpretation of the relevant constitutional norms. More precisely, Article 48 of the Constitution defines the institution of marriage in relation to protecting children, born within and out of wedlock. The biological component of marriage therefore obviously underpins the vision of the constituent assembly, being without a doubt that this regarded marriage as the union between a man and a woman, insofar as only through such a union, within or outside the confines of marriage, children can be born" (Paragraph 42, Decision 580/2016). My translation.

81 All the translations are the official translations of the Constitution available on the website of Romanian Presidency https://www.presidency.ro/en/the-constitution-of-romania (accessed 7 July 2021).

82 The official translation only uses the masculine pronouns here. The feminine is the author's addition.

MAGDALENA CRĂCIUN

Born in 1976, in Romania
Ph.D., University College London (2010)
Dissertation: *An Ethnography of Fake Brands in Turkey and Romania*

Lecturer, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest

Fellowships and Grants
(2015 – 2017) Principal Investigator, PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2650, UEFISCDI
Romania
(2013 – 2015) Individual Research Grant, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions EU
[Grant Agreement no. 327169]
(2011 – 2012) Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, British Institute at Ankara
(2010) AAA Commission of World Anthropologies International Scholarship
(2009) Firth Award, the Royal Anthropological Institute
(2009) Ratiu Foundation Award
(2006) Marie Curie Inter-Laboratory Visit Fellowship, Marie Curie SocAnth
(2005 – 2006) Central Research Fund, University of London
(2005 – 2006) Global Supplementary Grant, Open Society Institute
(2005) UCL Graduate School Research Projects Fund
(2004 – 2005) UCL Graduate Research Bursary in Anthropology
(2004 – 2005) Overseas Research Studentship Award

Participation to conferences/workshops/invited talks: University College London; University of Milano-Bicocca; SNSPA, Bucharest; Middle East Technical University, Turkey; SOAS and Pitt Rivers Museum; Bosphorus University, Istanbul; Czech Association of Social Anthropology, Prague

Published numerous research papers in refereed academic journals, book chapters, book and film reviews

Books

Islam, Faith and Fashion: The Islamic Fashion Industry in Turkey. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. (2017)

Material Culture and Authenticity: Fake Branded Fashion in Europe. London: Routledge. (2014)

BEING MIDDLE CLASS IN BUCHAREST: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Drawing upon ethnographic research conducted intermittently in the capital city of Romania between 2015 and 2021, this paper demonstrates that to be middle class in Bucharest means to engage in 'grounding work'. This type of work enables class subjectification in a similar way to 'boundary work'. Yet, 'grounding work' is less about drawing boundaries between the middle class and their class others, and more about highlighting the foundations that support what lies within and without these boundaries. The middle class becomes the moral middle of the society. This is a work through which middle-class people speak and act themselves into existence, individually and jointly.

Keywords: Middle class, subjectivity, morality, Romania, ethnography

Lamont (2000) draws attention to the importance of 'boundary work' in the constitution of class subjectivities: by employing moral, symbolic and socio-economic criteria, people articulate their difference from their class others and conceptualise their place within the social world; such boundaries are consciously used in the pursuit of a positive self-identification. Historical and anthropological studies point out that an acute concern with in-betweenness prompts the middle classes to energetically engage in 'boundary work', although the distinction criteria vary over time and space (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty 2012; Marsh and Hongmei 2016; Donner 2017).

The argument put forward here is that 'grounding work', and not only 'boundary work', enables subjectification as middle class. This work is less about drawing boundaries between the middle class and their class others, and more about highlighting the foundations that support what lies within and without these boundaries. The foundation can only be morality, the most solid foundation possible in a secular world.[1] This

41

'work' is therefore about asserting the moral integrity of middle-class individuals and declaring moral acts and thoughts as the preserve of the middle class. Liechty (2012: 271) partially captures the specificity of this 'work' when he points out that middle-class groups '[locate] themselves in a socio-moral middle ground while locating their class Others in morally compromised social locations "above" and "below" themselves.' In contrast, the 'grounding work' operates with a different vision of the middle, not vertical, as the 'above' and 'below' terms suggest, but horizontal, indexing a concentrical disposition of the various societal strata and equating the middle with the centre/the core. This 'work' is meant to turn the middle class into the middle moral ground of the society, and, in the process, to proclaim (and create the illusion of) the stability and solidity of its position. More, the intention is to moralise and, thus, depoliticise the middle. Attention to this type of 'work' becomes even more important in the current anthropology of the middle class, which is less enthusiastic about achievements and more concerned with the tensions and contradictions between expectation and experience (Heiman, Freeman & Liechty 2012; Donner 2017).

Theoretical and Methodological Choices

In a research project about middle class in contemporary Romania, this 'work' has become intelligible in spontaneous and solicited reflections about what the middle class represents and about the middle class as a category of self-identification (spontaneous in the sense of not being solicited by the researcher; they are nevertheless prompted by experiences and events that their utterers found important for being and doing middle class, so in a wider sense they are also solicited). In the first case, I noted an inclination to focus on aspirations and efforts to live 'the good life', understood as a meaningful, morally undergirded existence. In the second case, I observed a tendency to self-characterise or evaluate the middle-class individual as a 'good person', understood as someone who knows and does what is right, and, more, an impulse to report on the pleasures of adopting the 'good person' position.

Analytically, this inquiry into what being and doing middle class entails is tantamount to investigating a process of class subjectification. In the theoretisation of class to which I subscribe, it does matter what people think about their social location and what they do to position themselves

in the overall structure of class positions (subjective class position or class identity). However, this does not mean that I ignore in my analysis the structural conditions of possibility and what the notion of class is meant to emphasise, namely that "indirect and impersonal forces might delimit our position in society or preordain the opportunities we will have and the quality of life we will enjoy" (Weiss 2019: 23).

I draw upon a distinction between class as category of 'social and political *analysis*' and category of 'social and political *practice*' that Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 4) propose. In the second sense, which I employ, class is embodied, that is, done and lived through practices and performances, rather than a component of an analytical system into which people are slotted according to some criterion or other. Further, class is articulated in discourses that individuals and groups use to define their social position and declare their interests. Class is, in brief, a 'bundle of discourses and performances' that create and mark differences between social groups (Lentz 2015: 42). More, in the sense I operate with, class is also experienced in ethical terms: 'class raises issues of the perceived relative worth of individuals, and about the relation between how people are valued economically, and how they and their actions are valued ethically' (Sayer 2010: 163). Emotions such as pride, shame, resentment, envy, compassion, fear and contempt (Sayer 2005) inform these definitions of worth and are, thus, central to the subjective experiences of class.

More specifically, in this paper, I do not understand middle class as a discrete group defined by occupation, income levels or consumer indicators, but pay particular attention to how it is defined through discourses about what being and doing middle class entails. I interpret the discourses as outcomes of a process of subjectification, that is, the negotiation of one's position within a particular social, economic and political context and in relation to what others in similar and different positions do and declare (Skeggs 1997).

Methodologically, in order to develop these lines of inquiry into being and doing middle class, I rely on definitions and reflections gathered through casual conversations, interviews[2], participant observation and content analysis of social media postings. The most challenging part in this research was the selection of the interviewees. I used different strategies: the first was to invite to take part in the research people whom I considered to be middle class, based on criteria such as education, occupation, property ownership, leisure activities and cultural consumption; the second strategy was to ask people in my social milieu to put me in contact

43

with persons whom they considered appropriate for my research project, also clarifying with them why they selected those persons. In addition, I made sure that I included persons from different segments of the middle class among my interviewees, for the combination of different forms of capital mark the experience of the 'middle' in different ways (Bourdieu 1984). However, I did not aim to map the middle class in all its diversity.

Definitions of the middle class emerged from these encounters, however they seemed to differ once the utterer moved away from the 'concrete' of economic resources, as the following exchanges illustrate:

Ş. L.: What does middle class mean to you?

S.C.: Middle class? What does middle class mean? Wait a second, is this good or not? What do you think?

Ş. L.: I am interested in what YOU think.

S. C.: Well, it means to have a car, to have money, to have a job, to be educated, to stand on your feet sort of. Wait a second, I don't think having a car belongs to this category…everyone buys a car. And I know a bloke who used to sleep in a huge BMW…[3]

M.C.: This is a research about the middle class in Romania. My first question is this: in your opinion, what are the defining characteristics of the middle class?

S.M.: I think we could define…well, I have never thought about this until now…but I think we can define a middle-class person as being the individual who has secured his existence. This person can satisfy the needs at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, he has got everything he needs and, more importantly, he has an extra income. With this extra he can afford to invest, make, help…each person according to what one thinks and depending on what one believes in [..] Class exists. Let's be clear on this. Except that you need some basic criteria to be able to identify it. The problem starts here. [..] One of the reasons why the middle class in Romania is still not a stable category, a precise form or a certain level, is the fact that we no longer have moral guidelines. I mean this: when you talk about middle class, this is not only about money and properties. It is also about the way in which you use something, about the goal… how shall I put it? It is also about the ethics of the social use of these means […] I think there are at least two categories in the middle class. There is that common category, let me call it like this. These people have a normal dimension, they are healthy, I mean they don't have houses that are worth millions, only boorish, tasteless people have such houses. They have decent houses. It is actually a problem to own a house that it is well beyond your

needs, a maintenance problem first of all. I think we reach that point when a middle-class family needs to own a house that suits its needs, with the additional elements such as guest rooms and a large living room in which to host various events. […] Then there is the other category… I am not sure how to name them, maybe hypocrites? People who incessantly want to be at the top, want to be in vogue. Their houses are over-decorated, their cars are far beyond their needs…But they actually have no money, everything is on credit, everything is to show off…

A.S.: Who belongs to the middle class?

I.R.: The educated and the moneyed…and those who …are opened to the world, opportunities, in their free time take classes in personal development or spend time on Facebook and try to change the world, exchange and change opinions, express their opinions and worldviews. They also have the desire to surpass themselves, progress. They somehow feel that their place is not there, that they can do better and that they have to work hard to achieve this. For example, some of my university colleagues came by car to the faculty and said that their mums clean their houses, that they did not know how to use a washing machine, that they never had to or that they've just got back from their trips to Vienna, Venice and I don't know where. But, on the other hand, they were very entrepreneurial, I think this is the word. They were encouraged to start their own business, have initiatives, look for better things.[4]

Next to casual conversations and interviews, I draw upon observations of ways of being and doing middle class in public contexts, especially projects and places of socialisation, consumption and participation where middle-class people demonstrated their belonging and recognised others as belonging to this social space and where the overlaps and gaps between the material and discursive exemplifications of middle classness become visible. I followed on social media people whom I would categorise as middle class, not only personal acquaintances, but also persons whose opinions these acquaintances reposted and commented on.[5]

My interlocutors belonged to two categories: those who reluctantly included themselves in this category; and those who eagerly stated their belonging to this social formation (see below a discussion about the interlocutors who refused to self-identify as middle class).

B.R.: [long pause]…I don't think I have an image of the middle class people and, if we were to thick some objective criteria, I probably have some of them, but subjectively I don't picture myself as automatically

empathising [with middle class people]. Ah, well, I would like…and it would be wishful thinking to have someone include me into a box…and to consider one extreme, the uneducated and poor, people who can be easily manipulated, because they don't think with their own heads, and the other extreme those who became rich…and then this part of middle class, well, yes, I would probably be there. Look, until now, I have never imagined myself as belonging to the middle class…[6]

S. C.: I exceeded my condition [upward social mobility], that's for sure. But I don't know where I've arrived. I am not longer there, but I am not sure if I belong to the middle class or not. I mean sometimes, when I look around me, I ask myself if I don't earn too much and I tell myself that I had huge luck.[7]

For the first category, it was not necessarily a recognition of the fragility of 'being there' or a realisation that one was 'not yet there' in financial terms that impeded self-identification as middle class. The relational dimension of this notion and the implicit invocation of structural inequality and hierarchical stratification fed this reluctance, too. 'Class', Savage et al. (2001) point out, 'is not an innocent term but a loaded moral signifier.' Self-identification might be thus avoided for moral and political reasons. For the second category, it was rather their dream of belonging to the middle class that made them self-identify as such despite their limited capital, at least economic capital. They believed in the neoliberal promise that the middle class was a category open to everyone and strived to find a place for themselves within it.

I also met people who rejected the invitation to take part in my research because they thought that their disposable income was too low to guarantee them membership in the middle class. This reaction was all the more striking as the scholarly literature abounded in descriptions of the ways in which the middle class hid economic privilege under the cultural screens of hard work, achievement, meritocracy, honesty, civility, respectability or deservedness. I seemed to be offered the inverse, precisely because my interlocutors did not perceive themselves as being privileged and, therefore, tried to understand why this was the case. They admitted that they did not have to confront on a daily basis the anxieties of basic subsistence but emphasised that this did not make them 'proper' middle class either. The typical replies were: "Why would you think I belong to the middle class? I don't work for a corporation!" (i.e. I do not belong to the managerial-professional class) (B. M., researcher, mid-thirties) and

"Every month, one week before I get the salary, I have to borrow money. And you ask me if I think I belong to the middle class!" (I. P., mid-thirties, journalist).

Other researchers of postsocialist contexts have noted that class or middle class is reluctantly used for self-identification: Patico (2016: 280) points out that "class is an uncertain and emergent aspect of local social interaction"; Dunn (2008: 232) observes that "people don't perceive themselves overtly as members of social classes"; and recently Fengjiang and Steinmüller (2021: 18) emphasise that few of their interlocutors "acknowledge being 'middle class'". In this paper, I explore why this might be the case. In addition, I take discourses relating to the middle class, which need not actually mention these words, to be worthy objects of analysis.

The third methodological decision was to archive reflections about being and doing middle class posted on social media. I adopted this strategy in early 2017, when many middle-class persons I knew and/or interviewed took part in the anticorruption protests and voiced their opinions and/or shared opinions that they appreciated. Discontent with the way politics had been carried out, especially with new legislation that would have helped politicians from the ruling party to evade corruption charges, brought thousands on the streets of Bucharest and other major cities. These protests have been described as the culmination of postsocialist middle-class politics. "In Romania, as in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc", notes Deoancă (2017: 4), "middle class activism hopes to forge a more democratic future through calls for transparency, legality, and virtuous citizenship" (see also Poenaru 2017). For me, the protests were the events that could trigger the kind of reflections I was interested in.

The anti-corruption protests permitted me not only to better position my interlocutors within the middle class, but also to expand my network. Firstly, not all of them took part in the protests. My left-leaning interlocutors considered the protests to be an irrelevant struggle between local and international capital. More, though they were among the first to criticise the limited impact of the measures that the then ruling party took to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, many appreciated their adoption. Therefore, they refrained from actively participating in the protests. Secondly, my interlocutors used social media to voice theirs and/or share opinions about ethics and politics. I started to follow on social media persons that kept appearing in these comments and/or shared postings. They became a category of 'indirect' interlocutors in this project. Thirdly, not all segments

of the middle class were engaged in the protests. The then ruling party that the protesters contested had middle-class members and supporters as well. I started thus to pay more attention to the "anxious coexistence of various middle classes" (Heiman, Liechty and Freeman 2012: 14). As the materials included in this article demonstrate, I also cultivated my ability to recognise ethnographically the thin line between 'boundary work' and 'grounding work' in the ways in which my middle-class interlocutors instrumentalised morality in interclass programme of exclusion and intraclass debate over standards of inclusion.

More, after the protests ended, I continued to follow the discourses and activities of politicians and activists who capitalised on their participation to these protests and introduced themselves as promoters of a new type of politics in which moral integrity prevails (e.g. Save Romania Union, a 'party of the middle class' that was formed after these protests and advertised themselves as a new class of uncorrupted politicians; Tudor Chirilă, an actor and activist who vocally promoted an initiative to forbid convicted people to occupy public offices; Valeriu Ciolan Nicolae, an activist who introduced himself as a 'good person' and competed as an independent candidate for the Chamber of Deputies in December 2020; he has recently started a series of social media posts in which he analyses the public CVs of various politicians and civil servants and points out their distance from a life of honest, middle-class achievement). They received support from sections of the middle class, including persons whom I knew and/or interviewed. Most recently, since the pandemic has started, I follow middle-class reactions to this health crisis, archiving comments that betray positioning as the 'good subject', that is, a responsible citizen who stays at home, respects physical distancing measures, wears mask and gets vaccinated.

The Middle Class during Socialism

This process of class subjectification takes place in a society where the middle class has recently had a particular ideological trajectory. In a socialist society, the regime propaganda proclaimed, there were no classes. However, in the really existing socialist society, a large middle stratum had gradually developed. The 'paternalist' Romanian state, like the other Eastern European socialist states, promised a 'good life' to the deserving 'working people' and put this promise into practice in different ways: by

subsidising basic provisioning (e.g., food, water, utilities); housing many of its citizens in standardised apartment blocks; building schools and hospitals; and guaranteeing free access to education, childcare and health care. As Gille, Scarboro and Mincytė (2020: 23) point out, this "socialist middle class [..] enjoyed high levels of economic certainty, much like its Western counterparts, but unlike them, this resulted primarily from full employment and from their free access to education, health care, cultural activities, retirement, and various social benefits". The state also encouraged its citizens to become discerning and demanding consumers, and to live cultured lives through participation in leisure and cultural activities (Crowley and Reid 2012; Bren and Neuburger 2012; Fehérváry 2013).

Gille, Scarboro and Mincytė (2020: 22) note the irony:

> a society aimed at transcending, if not eradicating, capitalism ended up incubating a massive social group that was the ideological opposite of the Leninist concept of the working class — that is, collectively minded and whose class consciousness arose out of its productive and collective contribution to society rather than from its ability to achieve individual levels of material comfort.

Historical and anthropological studies illustrate how class distinctions operated in the purportedly classless socialist societies (Fehérváry 2013; Wasiak 2020). More often than not, materials, practices and values that were associated with pre-socialist bourgeois lifestyles served as means to convey to the 'working people' their new status—as something to adopt, adapt, imitate, or on the contrary, distance themselves from (Dunham 1990).

The Middle Class during Postsocialism

In the postsocialist society, Romania along with the other Eastern European societies, the pretense of a classless society has vanished from the political discourse, being replaced by the disregard for class and, paradoxically, the promotion of the middle class at a time when wealth and poverty co-created each other and classes distanced one from the other even more clearly. The middle class has been introduced as the 'deserving class' and 'the dominant class of the future' (Crowley 2015), whose mere

presence guarantees the betterment of society. Its assumed propensity for moral conduct would contribute to the Europeanisation of society, the imagined espousal of liberal values would ensure democratic stability, and the envisaged capacity to consume would support the development of market economies. The middle class has been thus pushed for as an 'aspirational category' (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty 2012: 19), with the expectation that large parts of the population would work towards the means of distinction and advancement necessary to live a middle-class life.

In these public discourses, the critical part of the term, the notion of 'class' has been toned down.[8] This has happened through the casting of the middle class as 'a benign category, free of implications of exploitation and social struggle' (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty 2012: 18), and its portrayal as an open and inclusive category. Anyone could potentially join the middle class, for every individual has the ability to fashion his/her own life and 'make' it in the new societal order. This discursive centrality has also translated into concrete politics, which supported ideas and activities associated with the middle class, from entrepreneurship to suburban gated communities and commercial centres (Chelcea and Druță 2016).

The ideological investment in the middle class is a postsocialist project. However, the insistence on the socio-political mission of this class aligns with a globally hegemonic neoliberal agenda. This turns everywhere the middle class into its favourite subject, believing that it is convinced, or that it can be convinced, to accept that the market is the sole arbitrator of relationships with the state, community, family and self. Kalb (2014) interprets the widespread promotion and adoption of idioms and projects of middle classness as an issue of 'false consciousness'. For him, this is a manifestation of the ways in which the upper-class intervenes in the class struggle between the '1 percent' and the subaltern groups. In researching discourses and debates about what doing and being middle class entail, I concur with Lentz (2015: 15), who stresses that "it is important to explore struggles over class labels, and the practices of distinction associated with them, without implicit or explicit assumptions about 'false consciousness'".

A Sense of Fragility

The emphasis on the middle class has been put forward in a society that went through profound changes in a relatively short period of time. Parts of the population have benefited from these societal developments.

The early years of the post-socialist period in particular were full of optimism, with many people enthusiastically engaging in projects of betterment, from body care, consumption of imported goods, renovation of the newly bought socialist apartments, and the building of villas and detached houses on the urban outskirts to ambitious educational projects and entrepreneurship. In contrast, other societal segments experienced dispossession. They could observe and could dream about the kinds of lifestyles that became possible in the new politico-economic system but could not really experience them. They have had instead to deal with contracting labour markets, stagnant wages, downward occupational mobility, growing socio-economic differentiation, and a radically different spectrum of opportunities for success in the new society.

More to the interest of this paper, membership in the socialist middle class did not necessarily translate into membership in the postsocialist middle class. As Patterson (2011) points out, there was a socialist 'good life' to be lost as the socialist regime broke down. And more, as Fehérváry (2013: 22) emphasises, "the dream of a universal middle class, one that came with the national objective to extend modern prosperity to all citizens, died with state socialism".

The 2010s—the ethnographic research that informs this paper has been carried out intermittently since 2015—represents a period in which new opportunities, constraints, contradictions, and uncertainties have appeared, shaping existing economic, social, and political relationships for the worse rather than for the better. This is a post-EU accession period that has been marked by migration, many Romanians moving for shorter or longer periods of time to the western parts of Europe in search of better lives (some also left in search of the means to pay the debts that they had accumulated trying to live 'good lives' as proper capitalist subjects, either consumers or entrepreneurs). This also includes, though in small numbers, middle-class people in search of a better 'good life'. More, this is a post-2008 period, with the impact of austerity politics resulting from the global financial crisis still being felt, and with new crises bubbling up incessantly at the local and regional levels.

In the recent years, calls for more state support for the 'deserving' middle class and less for the 'undeserving' lower class—especially the poor living on state benefits—are put forward (L.M., an entrepreneur in her mid-forties, for example, told me that the state should do more to support people like her because they pay the taxes that support the pensioneers and all sorts of "beneficiaries of our money"). "Being middle-class is [..]

only ever a temporary promise" (Donner 2017: 18). The elusiveness of the promise of supporting the development of the middle class causes dissatisfaction and disappointment. The middle-class utterers of such calls express a frustrated sense of entitlement.

Economic horizons have been further contracting not only because of the global financial crisis but also because of the eagerness of local political elites to implement radical neoliberal policies. Commentators point out that Romania, like other Eastern European post-socialist societies, has so successfully 'transitioned' to capitalism that now places market fundamentalism at its core and politicians embrace neoliberal ideas that may seem extreme in the West (Cistelecan 2019). Neoliberalism has thus fostered a palpable sense of fragility among many inhabitants of this region.

Its most common manifestation during my research was a constant questioning of the purpose and means of studying an inexistent or illusory social formation. The following examples are illustrative of this kind of questioning:

S.D. (retired schoolteacher, early sixties): You say that your research is about the middle class. Is there really such a thing as the middle class? I don't think so. Then what do you study? And why?

S.M. (entrepreneur, mid forties): You kind of started this project too late. Now, after the financial crisis, many people find it hard to pay back the money they borrowed from the banks to buy large flats or build houses. Are they still middle class, if by the end of the month there is hardly anything left in their account? Actually, you can work with this definition: the middle-class person is in debt to the bank.

A.C. (engineer, mid forties): You should know that in Romania everyone thinks they are middle class. Mainly because they own a tiny flat. Romania has the highest number of house owners in the EU, except that most of these properties are flats in concrete blocks. But how many of these owners can really be called middle class, that is, people who enjoy security and prosperity?

V.L. (activist, early thirties): I can tell you what the middle class is! The middle class shouts loudly that healthcare should be privatised, but if they have to pay for surgery at a privately held hospital, they will empty their accounts. It's an illusory middle class.

R.P. (department manager, late twenties): Our shop is in Promenada Mall, and most of our customers work in corporations. The Romanians are rude, waiting for the cashier to put their shopping in the bag. They buy all sorts of expensive, foreign foods. As if they forgot how to cook, or

what their mothers cooked for them. This is the Romanian middle class, all about status, competition. You find a different story about the middle class in the books, all about decency, respectability. So, do we really have a middle class?

In all these examples, the existence of the middle class is discussed in relation to objectifiable economic criteria such as income, savings and property ownership (echoes of a conviction that in contemporary Romania money is the only means to obtain social validation?[9]). In our conversations, these persons did not use/refused to use middle class as a category of self-identification. However, in the stories about themselves and the reflections about their society there were frequent references to recognisable middle-class lifestyles and values (e.g. the importance of education, ideals of professionalism, investment in particular forms of leisure and implication in charity work and political activities, and references to integrity, dignity and decency).

Being middle class is a disquieting experience anywhere, not only in post-socialist Romania. 'Whether the middle class looks down towards the realm of less, or up towards the realm of more, there is the fear, always, of falling' (Ehrenreich 1989: 12). Yet, in recent times, this fear has been even more acute in this part of the world.

R.R. (sales manager, late twenties) summarised this sense of fragility:

In a middle-class family – let's take my family for example, my parents were both engineers – parents wake up in the morning and go to work. Children go to school. In the evening, they dine together. In the weekend, they go for a picnic in nature, go to the mountains [..] Some might call this a banal life, but others grew up like this. I think this is the life of the middle class. [..] Nowadays this is hardly the case. You give the money you earn to the bank. You worry [..] As a middle-class person, you should work and, in exchange, have a decent life. The state and the employer should offer you this. But I no longer feel this. The middle class is no longer a middle class. Now you are forced to take a loan to buy a house and a car, the perks that come with the middle classness. This means that you chain yourself to corporations, banks, whatever. This is now the middle class. The class that has, but actually doesn't have money. But shouldn't you also think that maybe in five years you won't be able to pay that loan? What's going to happen then? But, at the same time, you cannot limit yourself…We must understand this person too. If you don't take this loan and don't take this step, you cannot enter this game. What are you to do? Rent a house, take a mediocre job? So you take on this burden.[10]

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have increased this feeling of fragility. C.D. (academic, mid-thirties) has recently vented her frustration on Facebook:

> Until this damn pandemic, I thought I was part of the middle class. Low middle class, but still. Now I realise that there is no such thing, I mean the middle class. We are all poor and forced to stay at home. And there are those rich people who go on exotic vacations. And above all are the extremely rich, who do and undo things.

In the interview, she explained that she did not mean economic impoverishment, although many middle-class people might have experienced financial difficulties due to the pandemic. In her words:

> For me, belonging to the middle class is tantamount with having a civic consciousness, that is, you are aware of who you are, what you do, what you want, what you expect from the community, the nation, it is up to you how far you go with this projection. So [middle classness] has also this part in which you believe – well, I used to believe that I have a say. But now I think these things do not matter anymore. I have nothing to say, I no longer have a say, in the sense that even if I have something to say, nobody listens to me anymore, I have no power to make my work known because I cannot organise protests…

C. felt that an effect of the pandemic was the diminishing, if not erasure, of the very possibility of the middle class to be middle class, that is, a class that has its say in the society.

'Grounding work', that is, the work of highlighting the foundations that support what lies within and without the boundaries of the middle class, is a response to – and an attempt to alleviate – this sense of fragility. It takes the form of a discursive and practical demonstration to oneself and the others that the middle class is the middle moral ground of the society.

'Grounding Work'

In some cases, the encounter with the researcher was the first occasion to publicly (reflect on the opportunity to) self-identify as middle class. I include here my most telling experience, for these chain reactions are

revelatory for the kind of 'work' I discuss here. A friend of mine mediated my encounter with M. S., an investment banker in his late thirties. By way of introduction, M. S. recounted that he found surprising this request to take part in a research about the middle class. His first reaction was: "Why me?" His second thought was: "Do I really belong to the middle class?" During the first minutes of our encounter, he emphasised that he had never thought of himself in these terms and had never discussed this issue with friends and family. He could nevertheless explain what the middle class meant, and his personal story was one of hard work as means of achieving social mobility. During the interview, he verbalised a sudden conclusion: "R. [i.e. our common friend] must have thought that I am middle class because we have a summer house. But it is just a small wooden house we bought for little money in a remote village." Two years after this meeting, I found out from Facebook that he migrated for good to Germany, the country where a 'good citizen', who does his share of the contract and pays his taxes gets the respect and services he deserves from the state. At the end of the interview, I asked M.S. to put me in contact with someone whom he found appropriate for this research.

So I met A.N., his neighbour in a residential area in the south of Bucharest, an IT-ist in his late thirties. During the first minutes of our encounter, A.N. told me that he started laughing when M.S. invited him to take part in a research about the middle class. Then a few questions came to his mind: 'Is this something good? Is it something bad? Do I really belong to the middle class? But if I don't belong to the middle class, then who does?' This reasoning made him accept my invitation. He also pointed out that he had never thought of himself in these terms. He spoke about how his parents invested time and money into his education, his days as a poor but ambitious student in Bucharest, his working years in various corporations and his fulfilled dream of living in a detached house in the suburbia. Upon reflection, towards the end of our meeting, he suggested that belonging to middle class could be a topic of discussion for people in their twenties. Those like him (i.e. people in their thirties and forties) usually talked about the practicalities of adult life and the responsibilities that come with parenting. "You just live, don't think about life. The whole idea is to live comfortably", he concluded. I for one wanted to know why he laughed when M.S. approached him on my behalf. It turned out that the laugh was a way of hiding the pleasant surprise of being classified as middle class (the way he translated the invitation to take part in a research

about the middle class). At the end of the interview, I asked A.N. to put me in contact with someone whom he found appropriate for this research.

Then I interviewed C.D., A.N.'s co-worker, an IT-ist and failed entrepreneur in his early forties. He informed me that A.N. advised him to accept to be interviewed because, and he quoted him, "if we are not middle class, then who is? For the sake of a scientific project, you too have to talk to her". A.N. and C.D. had a good laugh, too. Upon reflection, C.D. thought his friend was right, although he has rarely, if ever, thought of himself in these terms. I asked him if he included himself in the middle class. C.D. replied pensively: "I do not know. I thought about this after A. told me about this interview. I thought of my neighbour. He lives next door, a house like mine, he earns more than I do probably, but he parks cars at a five stars hotel. He knows this cannot last forever. I got this from our conversations. But is he middle class or not? If nothing happens to my head, I can only go up [i.e. upward social mobility]." The interview turned to a search for an answer to this question. C.D. returned to this question during the interview, trying to place various acquaintances, and implicitly himself, in a particular class, using a variety of criteria, and ending up refining his own understanding of class as not being reducible to economic capital. At the end of the interview, I asked C.D. to put me in contact with someone whom he found appropriate for this research.

And so, finally, I encountered C.D.'s friend, S.A., a corporate middle manager in her mid-thirties. She did not comment on the invitation to take part in the research and did not question her belonging to the middle class. Instead, she went straight into a confident monologue about how the middle class was essential to the proper functioning of the society, a provider not only of money via the taxes it diligently paid, but also of a moral compass. I cannot know if her conversation with C.D., and the exchanges between these other persons, played any role in this straightforward self-classification and elaborated explanation of why the middle class is the moral ground of the society. Yet, her discourse is an example of 'grounding work', stemming from the certitude, felt and/or performed, of moral worth.

Building the Foundations

An exploration of the interrelated themes of the 'good life' and the 'good person' further reveals the 'grounding work' (i.e. building the foundations)

that goes into the making of middle-class subjectivity. As part of their self-categorisation and discussion about the middle class, my interlocutors detailed their aspirations to live a 'good life.' They elaborated on what constituted one, on the joy and satisfaction associated with it, the efforts they put into securing one for themselves and their children, and the difficulties they faced. Yet, regardless of how they practiced middle classness, in their discourses they insisted that 'the good life' that they referred to was not reducible to a 'consumerist' good life.

This understanding reverberated even on a fashion blog that some of my interlocutors read. L.P. (blogger and art director, late thirties) explained to her followers how they could distance themselves from consumerism and to what effects:

> Dress asceticism can extend to other aspects of life, too: less but better furniture, more meaningful holidays, more tasteful food, more soulful movies. And this is just the beginning. Because when you allow yourself to be good to yourself, when you learn to say NO, when you find out what really suits you, when you support those who believe in you through your choices, when you make progress day by day, you begin to understand that you do not need a lot of people, things and ideas for whom and in which "this is fine too" predominates, but a few pieces and hearts that make you a happier and better person.

The 'good life' was, in other words, less about material prosperity and hedonistic happiness, and more about a meaningful, morally undergirded existence. In support of this claim, my interlocutors spoke about civic engagement, political mobilisation and virtuous immobility.

A. D. (photographer, early thirties) informed me how pleased she was that in the recent years 'a critical mass of people has gathered, people who have understood very well that they have not only rights, but also obligations towards the others and the society in which they live.' She added that people like her and her husband understood that to 'live a life worth living, they had to do something, like engage civically, clean a park, donate unused clothes, participate in the life of their communities.' Our meeting took place a few days before she was due to take part in the Swimathon, a fundraising event in which she would swim to collect money for an NGO.

Participant observation and analysis of social media content allowed me to ascertain the extent to which this was not a demonstration for

the researcher, but 'grounding work' done for oneself and the others. The wider the public who witnessed the moral integrity of middle-class individuals, the better. The Facebook pages that I followed often included announcements about personal contributions to and/or social and humanitarian causes, their owners volunteering, signing petitions and supporting campaigns. In 2018, the year Romania celebrated 100 years since its establishment, a cultural magazine that oriented itself towards a middle-class readership, DOR, compiled a list of one hundred Romanians, the main criterion being their sustained contribution to the common good. From a different perspective, this was a demonstration of the neoliberal encroachment. Neoliberalism, Muehlebach (2012) emphasises, entails an intensification of not only market rationalities, but also moral sentiments.

I met A.D. again in the Victoria Square, while she was taking part in the anticorruption protests together with her children and she was singing their favourite slogan, "come outside if you care" (*ieşiţi din casă dacă vă pasă*). She explained to me that she took the children with her "to teach them to fight for what they care about and for their country". Other middle-class people I knew and/or interviewed were in the Victoria Square as well, to protest the amnesty for the corrupt. The moral acts and thoughts were, after all, the preserve of the middle class. One evening I went to the Square in the company of A.O. (academic, late thirties). He and his friends came almost every evening to the Square. A.O. introduced me as someone who returned to Bucharest after many years of living abroad and was now interested in politics, the way she had never been before. In the discussions that ensued, they emphasised that they intended to make a 'good life' for themselves in their native country. They were nevertheless aware that this was possible only if they did their share of the 'good', for them and their co-nationals, through all sorts of means, political participation included.

Despite inhabiting a society in which dysfunctionalities, injustices and illegalities had long been the norm; more, despite living in a society that had experienced wave after wave of migration, with millions of Romanians now living abroad, many other people I talked to or followed on social media stated that they did not want to leave their country. They were, as middle-class persons should be, exemplary citizens. They had chosen to stay, fight for and make possible a 'good life' life for themselves and the generations to come. The anti-corruption protests were one of their means of (re)asserting the social centrality of the middle class as the middle moral ground of the society.

I recounted this encounter with A.O.'s friends to an acquaintance, L. M. (entrepreneur, early forties). Instead of a reply, she underlined the paragraph she most liked in an article entitled 'We cannot all go', which was published in Dilema Veche, a cultural magazine targeting the middle class. The paragraph reads as follows:

> We cannot all pack and leave. I do not want to feel guilty that I did not plan to leave, that I did not even consider it as an option. I honestly think that one can live here if one does what one knows best, as people do everywhere. And if you care. Now I know that resignation and fatigue lurk at every street corner. You feel their cold breath at the back of your head when you enter a state hospital. Or when you need to solve some problems in a public institution. [..] It is always hard, exasperating, unfair. Something is not working. It gets complicated. It takes time. I do not think we can change the entire country, only the small countries within Romania. And for this you need energy and determination. Altruism and vision. It is hard, but it is possible.

L. spoke at great length about this virtuous immobility, something I could easily understand, she assumed, having returned to my native country to do my share of the 'good'. In all these instances, the emphasis on the 'good' rendered explicit what the speakers believed or wanted others to believe, namely, that the middle class represented the middle moral ground of the society.

The publicly oriented social media posts of my interlocutors often include announcements about social and humanitarian causes and/or personal contributions to these causes, usually in the form of volunteering activities and donations. The first category can be included under Morozov's (2009) term of slacktivism, a portmanteau of 'slacking' and 'activism' that is meant to emphasise that this "feel-good online activism [..] has zero political or social impact". However, rather than assessing the (in)efficacy of this online activity, I approach it in line with 'an anthropology of the good' (Robbins 2013). These posts are oriented both inwards and outwards. Keane (2015) notes that the explicit presentations, via social media in this case, turn ethical acts into something that others understand, debate, respond to and reproduce. More, these explicit presentations and the use of the interactive affordances of social media stimulate not only an intellectual, but also an affective response. In other words, they contribute to building up confidence in one's capacity and that of the others like him/her to be and do good. The second category of social media posts

confirms/consolidates this affective state, demonstrating their authors' virtuous character and belonging to a virtuous community (rarely referred to in class terms from within, though).

Most of my interlocutors and the middle-class persons I got acquainted with via social media shared a meritocratic vision of 'the good life' as personal achievement. It is worth mentioning here that only a fraction of these interlocutors, rather left-leaning, precarious creatives, envisioned the 'good life' as a collective state of well-being. They argued for the return of the modernist-socialist model of a state that takes care of all its citizens and provides public amenities. More, they fiercely criticised the middle class for their neoliberalised worldview and inability to see how neoliberalism will eventually hurt them too ("the critique of the middle class is a largely middle-class phenomenon" – Mazzarella 2005: 4). The first implication of this widespread meritocratic vision was that various forms of privilege and support were carefully edited out of the stories of how they lived or tried to achieve this 'good life'. In Ouroussoff's words (1993; quoted in Carrier 2015: 31), these are people who "think that they are where they are because they have earned it".

More, this vision of 'the good life' as personal achievement denotes that the one who forges a 'good life' for himself/herself and the significant others is a 'good person'. In the Romanian public space, the more common incarnation of the 'good person' is 'the beautiful person' (*omul frumos*). In this case, aesthetics is ethics, 'beautiful' referring not to aesthetically attractive features, but virtuous character. At a charity event, a young woman was selling white T-shirts. The slogan read "I love beautiful people, who do terrific things" (*Iubesc oamenii frumoşi, care fac lucruri straşnice*). I asked her, "Who are the beautiful people?". She smiled, gestured towards the packed hall and replied, "We are." She expressed confidence in her capacity and that of people around her to be and do good.

Exhibiting the Foundations

This type of work enables class subjectification. It operates through a particular combination of ethics of conviction and ethics of responsibility. More, it declares moral capital to be the most important form of capital for the middle class and presumes morality to be the most stable and solid foundation that can possibly exist. Further, it proclaims the middle class to be the moral foundation of the society. In this way, this work 'grounds'

the middle class. It offers it a base, that is, morality, and offers the society a base, that is, the middle class as the moral ground. In circular fashion, by making it the stable and solid foundation of the society, it stabilises and solidifies the middle class. Consequently, it validates the aspirations to become middle class and legitimises the efforts to sustain middle-class status. This is, therefore, a type of work through which middle-class people speak and act themselves into existence, individually and jointly. Being middle class in Bucharest involves engaging in 'grounding work'. The stakes are existential. The recognition of this work becomes even more important in the current context. All over the world, not only in Romania, sections of the middle class struggle, their social reproduction seemingly impossible. Building/exhibiting the foundations is a discursive strategy to cover the feeling of sliding downwards.

NOTES

1   The persons who took part in this research stayed within a secular discursive framework, hence this framing in terms of morality. I did not investigate the relationship of this discourse to the religious models that have thrived in the public and private spheres throughout the country since 1989.

2   I have conducted research intermittently between 2016 and 2021, online research during the pandemic. Yet, some of the data used in this paper were collected between 2015 and 2017 as part of a larger project whose PI I was (UEFISCDI PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2650, details of this project can be found at https://clasamijloc.wordpress.com/about/).

3   This interview was conducted by Ş. Lipan, doctoral researcher in the project on middle classness in Romania that I led between 2015 and 2017. (UEFISCDI PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2650, details of this project can be found at https://clasamijloc.wordpress.com/about/).

4   This interview was conducted by A. Savu, doctoral researcher in the same project, (UEFISCDI PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2650.

5   This is the method I employed most often in two periods of my research, first during the 2017 protests and secondly between 2020 and 2021, when the pandemic forced me to switch to online research.

6   This interview was conducted by A. Savu

7   This interview was conducted by Ş. Lipan.

8   For a discussion of the timid re-entrance of the notion of class in the academic, media, and political discourse in Romania since the late 2000s, see Ban (2015).

9   Patico (2005; 2008) focuses on impoverished Russian teachers, that is, a section of the socialist middle class which struggled to maintain this status during post-socialism. She shows how teachers pursued both material respectability and moral virtue. They simultaneously accommodated and resisted market forces.

10   This interview was conducted by Ş. Lipan.

Bibliography

Ban, C., 'Beyond Anticommunism. The Fragility of Class Analysis in Romania,' *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, 2015: 640–50.

Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, London, 1984.

Bren, P. and M. Neuburger, *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.

Brubaker, R. and F. Cooper, "Beyond 'identity', in *Theory and Society* 29, 2000: 1–47.

Carrier, J., „The concept of class", in J. Carrier and D. Kalb (eds.), Anthropologies of Class. Power, Practice and Inequality, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015. P. 25-40.

Chelcea, L. and O. Druță, "Zombie Socialism and the Rise of Neoliberalism in Post-socialist

Central and Eastern Europe," in *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57 (4/5), 2016: 521–44.

Cistelecan, A. 2019. 'Sinceritatea de clasă', *Vatra,* 21 June. https://revista vatra.org/2019/06/21/alex-cistelecan-sinceritatea-de-clasa/?fbclid =IwAR16RqqQT-dgzImRMICDyzLXHNYyW5-2C64z3w-hCF9ADj3RVy AOqKDhC5g (accessed 11 May 2021)

Crowley, S., "Russia: The Reemergence of Class in the Wake of the First 'Classless' Society," in *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, 2015: 692-714.

Crowley, D. and Reid, S., *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 2010.

Deoancă, Adrian. 2017. "Class Politics and Romania's 'White Revolution,'" in *Anthropology News*, 6 July 2017, http://www.anthropology-news.org/index. php/2017/07/06/class-politics-and-romanias-white-revolution/ (accessed 10 February 2021)

Donner, H. "The anthropology of the middle class across the globe", in *Anthropology of this Century* 18, 2017. http://aotcpress.com/articles/ anthropology-middle-class-globe/ Accessed 24 January 2021.

Dunham, V., *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1990.

Dunn, E. C., "Subjectivity after Socialism: An Invitation to Theory Building in Anthropology,"

in A. Vonderau and I. Schroeder (eds.), *Changing Economies, Changing Identities: Personhood after Socialism*, Lit Verlag, Munich, 2008. P. 228- 234.

Ehrenreich, B., *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1989.

Fehérváry, K., *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2013.

Fengjiang, J. and H. Steinmüller, "Leadership Programmes: Success, Self-improvement, and Relationship Management Among New Middle-class Chinese", *Ethnos* (online, 7 Jan 2021, 1-22) https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00141844.2020.1867605

Heiman, R., C. Freeman and M. Liechty (eds.). *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography*. School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe, 2012.

Kalb, D., "Class: the urban commons and the empty sign of 'the middle class' in the twenty-first century", in D. M. Nonini (ed.), *A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. Wiley, New York, 2014. P. 157–76.

Lamont, M., *The Dignity of Working Class Men*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000.

Lentz, C., "Elites or middle classes? Lessons from transnational research for the study of social stratification in Africa", in Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies, 161, 2015. https://www.blogs.uni-mainz.de/fb07-ifeas-eng/files/2019/07/AP_161.pdf

Liechty, M. "Middle-class déjà vu: conditions of possibility, from Victorian England to contemporary Kathmandu." In Heiman, R., C. Freeman and M. Liechty (eds.), *The Global Mid-dle Classes: Theorizing Through Ethnography*, School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe, 2012. P. 271–99.

Marsh L. L. and L. Hongmei, *The Middle Class in Emerging Societies: Consumers, Lifestyles and Markets,* Routledge, London, 2016.

Mazzarella, W., "Middle Class", in R. Dwyer (ed.), South Asia Keywords, https://d3qi0qp55mx5f5.cloudfront.net/anthrolpology/docs/mazz_middleclass.pdf

Muehlebach, A., *The moral neoliberal: welfare and citizenship in Italy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012.

Patterson, P. H., *Bought and Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Yugoslavia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2011.

Patico, J., *Consumption and Social Change in a Post-Soviet Middle Class*. Woodrow Wilson International Center Press and Stanford University Press, Washington, DC and Stanford, CA, 2008.

Patico, J., "Culturedness, Responsibility and Self-Help: Middle-class Contexts in Post-socialist Russia," in L. L. Marsh and L. Hongmei, *The Middle Class in Emerging Societies: Consumers, Lifestyles and Markets*, Routledge, New York, 2016. P. 19 - 32.

Poenaru, F., "Street Protests in Romania: What Lurks Beyond the Headlines," in Political Critique & European Alternatives, 6 February 2017, http://politicalcritique.org/cee/2017/romania-protestscorruption/ . Accessed 11 July 2021.

Savage M., G. Bagnall and B. Longhurst, "Ordinary, Ambivalent and Defensive: Class Identities in the Northwest of England", in *Sociology*, 2001, 35(4): 875-892.

Sayer, A., *The moral significance of class*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005.

Sayer, A. "Class and morality," in S. Hitlin and S. Vaisey, *Handbook of the sociology of morality*, Springer, New York, 2010. P. 163–178.

Scarboro, C., D. Mincytė and Z. Gille, *The socialist good life : desire, development, and standards of living in Eastern Europe*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2020.

Skeggs, B, *Formations of Class and Gender*, Sage, London,1997.

Wasiak, P., "VCRs, Modernity, and Consumer Culture in Late State Socialist Poland", in C. Scarboro, D. Mincyte, Z. Gille (eds.), *The Socialist Good Life: Desire, Development, and Standards of Living in Eastern Europe*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 2020. P. 132- 161.

Weiss, H., *We Have Never Been Middle Class*, Verso, London, 2019.

LUCIA DRAGOMIR

Née en 1967, Roumanie

Doctorat (2005) : Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris
Thèse : *Une institution littéraire entre exigences artistiques et commande politique. L'Union des Ecrivains pendant la période communiste*

Domaine principal de recherche : institutions littéraires, échanges littéraires des pays communistes

Lect . dr. Université de Bucarest, Faculté des Langues et Littératures Etrangères

Conférences et colloques en Roumanie, France, Suisse, Allemagne, Bulgarie

Livres et coordination de volumes collectifs :
France, Roumanie

« *AU-DELA DU FLEUVE DE L'AMITIE* ». LES RENCONTRES LITTERAIRES ENTRE LA ROUMANIE ET LA BULGARIE DANS LA PREMIERE DECENNIE COMMUNISTE

Résumé

Malgré certains désagréments et difficultés pratiques, les rencontres entre les écrivains roumains et bulgares dans la première décennie communiste donnent l'impression de se dérouler mieux que les échanges des Roumains avec les autres confrères de l'Est. Mais si les rapports des écrivains invités sont en général pleins de superlatifs à l'égard de l'accueil dans l'autre pays, il semble toutefois que l'investissement des autorités communistes dans les visites « de popularisation », censées mener à une véritable connaissance réciproque entre les deux pays et leurs littératures, n'a pas eu les résultats escomptés.

Mots-clés : échanges littéraires, Roumanie, Bulgarie, rencontres littéraires, communisme, Union des Ecrivains

L'analyse croisée des mécanismes et des perceptions des « circulations littéraires horizontales »[1] entre les pays dits « frères » à l'époque communiste[2] - dont je privilégie ici les rencontres entre les écrivains roumains et bulgares - fait sortir à la surface des micro-logiques signifiantes dans le tissu même d'une réalité complexe et souvent différente de l'image stéréotypée que l'on a parfois sur l'homogénéité de ce que l'on appelle le « Bloc de l'Est »[3].

Obéissant à une logique plus informelle quoique politique, les rencontres des écrivains aident à comprendre, au-delà des plans de travail, statistiques ou notes officielles, la perception des échanges par les acteurs directement impliqués dans leur déroulement. Les documents qui en rendent compte sont nombreux car les écrivains invités sont tenus, d'une part, à s'impliquer activement dans la vie littéraire du pays visité

et, une fois de retour, à la « promouvoir » chez eux par des publications littéraires ou conférences et, d'autre part, à dresser des rapports de visite pour l'usage interne des institutions impliquées dans ce processus.

Cette étude s'appuie donc sur une recherche empirique croisant plusieurs types de sources, dont des fonds d'archives, parmi lesquels j'ai privilégié l'analyse des documents du *Fonds de l'Institut roumain pour les relations culturelles avec l'étranger* et de son homologue en Bulgarie, *le Comité bulgare pour l'amitié et les relations culturelles avec l'étranger*. Le croisement des documents extrêmement riches de ces instituts permet de multiplier les points de vue sur les échanges, ils se confirment et se complètent souvent réciproquement. Le terrain que j'ai étudié permet dès lors d'avoir un regard critique sur les échanges entre les deux pays, car il laisse parfois transparaître une certaine rupture entre les publications à caractère public (articles, ouvrages), qui donnent une image harmonieuse des rencontres littéraires, et les rapports destinés au circuit institutionnel fermé ou les confessions des écrivains publiées après 1989.

« Au service de la construction commune du socialisme guidés par l'invincible Union Soviétique »

Les échanges culturels entre les pays de l'Est ont comme but déclaré de se mettre « au service de la construction commune du socialisme, de la cause du front international de la paix à la tête duquel se trouve l'URSS »[4]. Ils sont par conséquent contrôlés par des organismes politiques et encadrés par des conventions bilatérales de coopération que les « pays frères » concluent annuellement.

La Bulgarie fait partie des premiers pays avec lesquels la Roumanie signe des conventions culturelles après la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale (dès 1947)[5]. Et ce seront deux organismes surtout qui veilleront à ce que ces accords soient mis en pratique : l'Institut roumain pour les relations culturelles avec l'étranger (IRRCS) et son homologue, le Comité bulgare pour l'amitié et les relations culturelles avec l'étranger (désormais BGK) ; ils suivent le modèle du célèbre Institut pan-soviétique des relations culturelles avec l'étranger (VOKS) qui représente, selon Cœuré (2016), « l'invention d'un modèle de contact centré sur des voyages sous contrôle étatique ».

Les deux instituts coopèrent de manière étroite[6] : des commissions « mixtes » formées de leurs représentants sont chargées d'élaborer et

signer les conventions culturelles aussi bien que les Plans annuels de travail pour leur mise en application. Elles se réunissent dès lors chaque année à Sofia et à Bucarest. Au bout de quelques jours de discussions plus ou moins tendues, leurs membres (parmi lesquels on compte parfois des écrivains) sont récompensés par des excursions à travers le pays d'accueil. La satisfaction du travail accompli tout comme le plaisir du tourisme et les cadeaux échangés entre les délégations font oublier les tensions et les discours prononcés à la fin des travaux en rendent compte :

> Aidés par la politique des partis des ouvriers de nos pays ayant à leur tête nos dirigeants aimés, les camarades Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej et Valko Tchervenkov, nous veillerons à ce que le Plan de travail soit une contribution à notre lutte commune pour la conquête de la paix et pour la construction du socialisme dans nos pays. La signature de notre Plan de travail pour la mise en application de la convention culturelle roumaine-bulgare pour 1953 est un succès de nos peuples, facteurs actifs dans l'immense camp de la paix dirigé par l'invincible URRS[7].

Guerre froide oblige, les déclarations de circonstance n'oublient pas « les impérialistes américains et anglais » ni « leur serviteurs tel le bourreau Tito », qui « deviennent fous de colère devant nos succès »[8].

> *Plan pour la mise en application de la Convention de coopération culturelle entre la RPR et la RPB entre le 1ᵉʳ mai 1950 et le 1ᵉʳ mai 1951 (extraits)*
> *Littérature*
> *14. On échangera les œuvres littéraires principales éditées par les principales maisons d'édition des deux pays, en fournissant de chaque côté deux exemplaires de ces ouvrages. On continuera d'échanger les publications littéraires importantes en deux exemplaires.*
> *15. Les deux parties traduiront et publieront deux œuvres littéraires de l'autre pays sur recommandation de ce dernier. A cet égard les parties échangeront deux fois par an la liste des œuvres littéraires recommandées pour la traduction accompagnée de résumés et de courtes biographies de leurs auteurs.*
> *16. Chaque partie enverra ses propositions pour une anthologie de poésie qui devra sortir, si possible, à la fin de l'année.*
> *17. Les deux parties continueront d'échanger les listes des publications interdites.*
> *18. Les deux parties veilleront à ce que les revues Flacăra, Contemporanul, Viaţa Românească, respectivement Septemvri, Litératouren Front, Izkoustvo publient des récits, poésies et des articles, comptes rendus, reportages, photographies sur la vie culturelle de l'autre pays.*
> *19. Chaque partie enverra un écrivain pour un échange d'expérience et la connaissance de la littérature de l'autre pays. La durée de la visite sera d'une trentaine de jours.*
> *20. Les deux pays étudieront la possibilité des échanges d'écrivains pour une période plus longue*[9].

L'encadré ci-dessus présente à titre d'illustration quelques extraits du Plan pour la mise en application de la Convention culturelle pour 1950/1951. A peu d'exceptions près, les conventions ne changent pas de manière significative d'une année à l'autre dans la première décennie communiste. Pour ce qui est des échanges littéraires, ces documents prévoient des échanges de livres et revues littéraires, des listes de titres proposés pour la traduction, tout comme des listes de publications interdites[10], la réalisation réciproque d'anthologies de poésie ou de prose, la publication d'articles sur la vie littéraire de l'autre pays, l'organisation de soirées et festivités dédiées à la littérature, aux anniversaires littéraires ou aux événements ou personnalités politiques de l'autre pays[11]. A ce propos, chaque pays envoie les matériels nécessaires pour l'organisation de telles manifestations. Ainsi, en 1952, par exemple, lors de la fête du 23 août, « jour de la Libération de la RPR », la presse bulgare publie des articles élogieux « sur les réalisations dans tous les domaines et le chemin vers le socialisme » du pays voisin. Sont aussi organisés des concerts

et séances cinématographiques (les Roumains envoient en Bulgarie cette année-là le film *Viaţa învinge* [*Le triomphe de la vie*], suivant les commandements idéologiques de l'époque, on s'en doute). Les écrivains bulgares s'y impliquent aussi : Latchézar Stantchev écrit pour *Litératouren Front* l'article « Dans le pays de Gheorghiu-Dej » où il fait part au peuple bulgare des impressions sur sa visite en Roumanie. *Litératouren Front* publie également pour la même occasion des articles signés par les idéologues du PC roumain, tel Ion Vitner, sur les « succès » de la littérature roumaine et la « situation » des écrivains, tout comme la poésie *Azi ţara ta e casa ta* [*Aujourd'hui ton pays est ta maison*] d'Alexandru Toma, un choyé du régime de Bucarest[12]. A son tour, la Roumanie célèbre en septembre 1954, « par un grand nombre de manifestations d'amitié à l'égard du peuple bulgare », le 10e anniversaire de la « Libération de la RPB par la glorieuse armée soviétique ». Les écrivains roumains y sont présents par l'organisation d'une soirée littéraire dédiée à la Bulgarie à la Maison des Ecrivains :

> A cette occasion, S. Iosifescu a parlé du développement de la nouvelle littérature bulgare. Les poètes M. Breslaşu, Mihu Dragomir et Al. Andriţoiu ont lu des fragments des œuvres des poètes bulgares Botev, Vaptsarov, Bagriana et Daskalova. Il y a eu ensuite un programme artistique exécuté par des artistes de l'Opéra d'Etat qui ont interprété des pièces bulgares, soviétiques et roumaines[13].

Pour le même anniversaire du 9 septembre bulgare, est ouverte à Bucarest une exposition de livre bulgare en présence des représentants de l'IRRCS, du Ministère roumain de la Culture et de la vie culturelle roumaine. L'écrivaine Lucia Demetrius, « deux fois lauréate du Prix d'Etat » y a une intervention sur le développement de la culture dans la RPB[14].

Certes, les écrivains promus du pays célébré aussi bien que ceux impliqués dans les célébrations du pays « frère » comptent parmi les fidèles, ayant donné leur adhésion aux nouveaux commandements idéologiques de l'époque. En même temps, les années 1950 ouvrent en Roumanie comme ailleurs des campagnes de « revalorisation de l'héritage du passé par le biais de l'enseignement marxiste-léniniste ». Les Unions des Écrivains y participent par la célébration des écrivains dits « nationaux »[15], Mihai Eminescu, Ion Luca Caragiale, parmi d'autres, en Roumanie, Ivan Vazov, Khristo Botev ou Nikola Vaptsarov en Bulgarie. (Panova 2001 : 17 ; Mocanu 1998 : 45-51). Ces « écrivains nationaux » servent

aussi les buts de la propagande externe, comme le montre, parmi d'autres documents[16], le fragment cité ci-dessus.

Les deux pays sont aussi au courant de ce qui paraît dans la presse de l'autre et les archives consignent très souvent dans des « comptes rendus de presse » les activités de l'espace littéraire de l'autre pays. A titre d'illustration, j'ai choisi un extrait significatif pour ce qui est d'une certaine influence et convergence des pratiques entre les deux pays :

> Pour écrire de manière plus réaliste, plus proche de la vie, les écrivains de la RPB rencontrent souvent les lecteurs qui discutent et critiquent leurs livres. Ainsi, dans la salle de festivités de la Fabrique de fibres textiles « Le 1er Mai » on a discuté publiquement du roman *Les jeunes filles des usines* de Krastin Bélev. A part les ouvriers de cette fabrique, ont participé aux discussions des ouvriers et bibliothécaires d'autres fabriques. Les discussions ont été vives. L'écrivain a promis de tenir compte des observations et critiques faites pour la deuxième partie du roman qui s'intitulerait *Le chant des machines*[17].

Il est difficile de ne pas observer la ressemblance avec « le cas roumain d'*Ana Rosculeţ* », une nouvelle de 1949 de l'écrivain Marin Preda. Comme Preda l'a indiqué plus tard, les idéologues roumains ont voulu créer un « cas » (Crăciun, Popescu 1989 : 381). La nouvelle de Preda, malgré les efforts de l'auteur de s'adapter aux commandements idéologiques, est le prétexte pour déclencher « la bataille contre le naturalisme » et pour mettre au pilori la critique littéraire qui n'aurait pas été assez « combative ». Toute cette orchestration est faite à l'aide de la « critique de masse » : c'est « la lettre d'une ouvrière » qui révèle les défauts de la nouvelle. En réalité, dit Preda (*ibid.*), cette lettre est l'œuvre des idéologues. Ils critiquent par l'intermédiaire de la soi-disant ouvrière les « habitudes bourgeoises » du personnage central de la nouvelle et recommandent à l'auteur de représenter dans sa création des ouvrières « exemplaires aussi bien dans la production que dans le travail politique » (Selejan 1994 : 157). La prise de position de « l'ouvrière » est suivie d'une rencontre de l'auteur avec les ouvrières de la fabrique « Filature de coton ». La conclusion de ce « cas » va de soi :

La discussion de l'UE s'est avérée très fructueuse. Elle a attaqué le problème du naturalisme, de l'objectivisme, de l'authenticité des personnages et des situations. On a pu ainsi voir que même les écrivains les plus doués peuvent glisser sur la pente du naturalisme, pouvait-on lire dans la presse de 1950 (*ibid.* : 165-167).

Les visites, *« l'un des moyens les plus efficaces pour promouvoir les réalisations de notre pays »*

L'un des points les plus importants des Conventions culturelles concerne les visites des écrivains pour « un échange d'expérience et pour la connaissance de l'autre pays ». Les Conventions stipulent à cet égard le partage égal des frais entraînés par ces voyages :

> Le pays qui envoie paiera l'aller de son représentant et le pays d'accueil supportera tous les frais de visite de même que le retour ; le pays qui envoie assurera la récompense des gens de lettres pour leur activité lors des visites dans l'autre pays et le pays d'accueil leur accordera, à part le séjour complet, la somme de 600 lei, respectivement 1200 léva par jour[18].

« Les troubadours de temps nouveaux »

Année	Ecrivains roumains en visite en Bulgarie	Ecrivains bulgares en visite en Roumanie
1945	Mihail Sadoveanu	
1947		Khristo Dimitrov Bélev
1949	Mihail Davidoglu, Mihail Novicov, Geo Dumitrescu	Gueorgui Karaslavov
1950	Ion Călugăru	
1951		Emil Stefanov Khristo Dimitrov Bélev
1952	Anatol E. Baconski et Dumitru Corbea (déc. 1952-janv. 1953)	Latchézar Stantchev
1953	Aurel Mihale	Nikolaï Zidarov Stefan Savov Mladen Issaev
1954	Radu Cosașu András Sütő	Orlin Petkov Vassilev Emil Tomov Petrov Kliment Tzatchev
1955	Demostene Botez	
1956	Petru Vintilă, Georgeta Drăgoi, Cezar Drăgoi, Ioana Gafița et Mihai Gafița Dumitru Mircea Valentin Deșliu	Guiontcho Gueorguiev Bélev

1957	Demostene Botez Nina Cassian Mihai Beniuc	Dora Gabé
1958		Anguel Todorov avec une délégation de l'UEB Assen Bossev
1959		Pavel Spassov

Qui sont donc « les troubadours des temps nouveaux » qui voyagent dans le pays voisin ? Certes, tout le monde ne peut pas partir ; dans la première décennie communiste, tout au moins, il fallait être un écrivain ayant embrassé la nouvelle idéologie pour pouvoir bénéficier d'un tel voyage.

Il y a tout d'abord les « privilégiés » des voyages, selon la position occupée dans l'espace littéraire et au sein des Unions des Ecrivains. Dans le tableau ci-dessus[19] sont présents tout d'abord « les ingénieurs des âmes en chef » (Vaissié 2008) : les présidents, secrétaires et membres des Comités directeurs et Bureaux des Unions des Ecrivains : N. Zidarov – auteur de l'article « Au-delà du fleuve de l'amitié », publié dans le journal *Litératouren Front* de Sofia au retour de sa visite en Roumanie -, G. Karaslavov, A. Todorov, M. Issaev, Guiontcho Bélev de Bulgarie et les roumains M. Sadoveanu, M. Beniuc (qui profite pleinement de ses fonctions, enregistrant un nombre significatif de visites dans les pays communistes, et non seulement, tout au long de sa carrière à la tête de l'UER), Mihail Novicov, Mihail Davidoglu et Demostene Botez. Accompagnés souvent de délégations d'écrivains, ceux-ci sont présents aux réunions importantes des écrivains du pays voisin, à commencer par les congrès de fondation des Unions des Ecrivains, institutions destinées à avoir le monopole des espaces littéraires de l'Est (Haraszti 1983, Garrard 1990, Dragomir 2007, Vaissié 2008, Negura 2009). Les documents concernant ces congrès, parmi lesquels les rapports des délégations présentes là, témoignent des bases communes et lignes directrices tracées partout devant les écrivains de la région dès 1949 : à savoir la nouvelle mission de l'écrivain-citoyen, la promotion du réalisme socialiste comme méthode de création et la lutte contre le cosmopolitisme, l'esthétisme, le formalisme - qualifiés de « positions erronées ». En mars 1949, lors de la Conférence pour la fondation de la nouvelle UER, c'est G. Karaslavov, fidèle membre du PC, qui est le délégué de la Bulgarie à Bucarest[20]. Karaslavov, futur secrétaire principal et président de l'UEB, deviendra « un grand ami » de la Roumanie et de son homologue roumain Beniuc[21].

76

Certains écrivains visitent même plusieurs fois le pays voisin. Khristo Bélev revient ainsi en Roumanie en 1951, ce qui lui offre l'occasion d'exprimer dans un entretien pour la presse roumaine « son bonheur de voir toutes les évolutions positives » de la Roumanie par rapport à sa première visite en 1947[22]. Pour ses mérites dans la « popularisation » du pays voisin, le roumain D. Botez, considéré à son tour comme « un vrai ami de la Bulgarie », est récompensé par un séjour de deux semaines dans une des maisons de création des écrivains bulgares, accompagné cette fois-ci par sa femme. En voici les faits :

> Demostene Botez, poète, député de la Grande Assemblée Nationale, lauréat du Prix d'Etat, qui a visité notre pays en 1955 dans le cadre de la Convention culturelle, a mené une vaste activité de popularisation de notre pays. A part les multiples rapports qu'il a dressés, il a écrit des poésies dédiées à la Bulgarie, a parlé à la Radio Bucarest, a traduit des poésies pour l'anthologie de la poésie bulgare qui vient de paraître en Roumanie, a écrit la préface du livre *Récits* de Luben Karavelov, traduit en roumain, a écrit plusieurs articles et le livre *Arc-en-ciel au-dessus du Danube. Impressions de Bulgarie*[23].

A part ces « privilégiés », les autres écrivains recommandés pour un déplacement dans le pays voisin dans les années 1950, qu'ils soient plus âgés ou très jeunes, comptent parmi ceux qui ont fait preuve de leur fidélité politique et littéraire.

Quant aux Roumains, Ion Călugăru est parmi les premiers à visiter la Bulgarie pour participer en 1950 aux festivités liées au centenaire de la naissance de Ivan Vazov. Son arrivée et sa conférence sur Vazov à l'Académie des sciences de Sofia sont annoncées dans le principal quotidien du PC bulgare, *Rabotnitchesko Délo*[24]. Son roman réaliste socialiste *Oțel și pâine* [*Acier et pain*] paraît trois ans plus tard en bulgare[25]. Nina Cassian, quant à elle, après avoir fait ses débuts avec un volume qui sera l'objet des critiques des idéologues du PC, doit prouver qu'elle est digne de la confiance des autorités signant plusieurs volumes de poésie militante avant de se retrouver sur la liste de recommandations pour un voyage en Bulgarie en 1957[26]. Il y a également la catégorie des jeunes « prometteurs », diplômés de L'Ecole de Littérature « Mihai Eminescu », tels Radu Cosașu et Dumitru Mircea. Si pour le premier le voyage en Bulgarie en 1954 est probablement son dernier à l'extérieur du pays dans les années 1950, car il s'éloigne après 1956 des commandements idéologiques

(Cosașu 2001), D. Mircea est lauréat du Prix d'Etat et auteur avant son départ en Bulgarie du roman *Pâine albă [Pain blanc]*, traduit en bulgare deux ans plus tard[27]. *Pain blanc*, ayant comme sujet la coopérativisation de l'agriculture, est considéré en 1952 par le prosateur soviétique Arcadi Perventev comme un bon modèle à suivre pour les écrivains réalistes socialistes, voire un modèle du courage d'aborder des thèmes tabous pour l'époque : les erreurs commises par certains responsables communistes dans les villages roumains (Mareș 2013 : 102-103).

Quant aux écrivains bulgares, les fiches biographiques envoyées en Roumanie sont éloquentes pour ce qui est du bien-fondé de leur présence sur la liste des voyageurs. Résumant la vie et l'œuvre des membres des délégations, ces fiches insistent, certes, sur l'origine sociale « saine » et la fidélité politique et sur leurs productions littéraires qui suivent la nouvelle ligne idéologique. La connaissance de la littérature soviétique compte parmi les grands avantages. Les extraits biographiques ci-dessous en sont de parfaites illustrations :

> **Nikolaï Zidarov**. *Dans ses poésies et ses* Sonnets à Moscou *il montre avec émotion la joie avec laquelle notre peuple accueille la liberté, son amour infini et la reconnaissance pour les peuples soviétiques. Il est issu d'une famille pauvre ; devient membre de l'Union de la Jeunesse ouvrière en 1933 ; écrit pour les journaux progressistes, raison pour laquelle il est arrêté par le pouvoir fasciste. Après le 9 septembre il est très actif sur le front littéraire. Dans sa littérature tout comme dans ses obligations aux éditions* Narodna Mladej *il fait preuve du sérieux et discipline. Il remplit avec honnêteté son devoir comme membre de l'Organisation de Parti de l'UEB. D'autres publications :* L'Etoile du Kremlin, Dimitrov est parmi nous[28].

> **Emil Stefanov**. *Collabore dès étudiant aux journaux progressistes. Dans ses études et articles de critique littéraire il se conduit selon le principe et la base de la méthode du réalisme socialiste et du matérialisme historique. Il a étudié l'activité d'Ivan Vazov et la relation du grand écrivain Maxim Gorki avec les écrivains bulgares et son influence sur ces derniers. Il a combiné activité littéraire et travail politique, combattant ainsi dans les premières lignes contre les ennemis allemands ; autour des événements ayant marqué la Libération de la Bulgarie, il a mené une activité infatigable de combattant dans les rangs du PCB. Il mène une activité multilatérale au sein de la révolution culturelle en Bulgarie[29].*

Emil Tomov Petrov. *Fait partie de la jeune génération de critiques littéraires qui ont grandi et se sont formés après le 9 Septembre 1944. Il est issu d'une famille des enseignants populaires [?!] – à présent retraités. Son père est un militant social actif et membre du PCB. Petrov suit avec application la vie littéraire de l'URSS et est un spécialiste des problèmes de la littérature contemporaine soviétique. Il connaît aussi bien notre littérature nouvelle[30].*

Enfin, lorsque les écrivains intègrent des délégations, ces dernières sont composées de sorte qu'elles transmettent « correctement » à Sofia ou à Bucarest le point de vue des Unions des Ecrivains et une image « positive » de leur pays. Les jeunes écrivains prometteurs sont ainsi intégrés dans des délégations à côté des écrivains fiables. De cette manière, on veille à ce que le contrôle des comportements et des interventions au cours des discussions soit assuré, tout comme une certaine « filiation » littéraire, comme le souligne Panova (2001 : 34) en parlant des délégations bulgares. C'est ainsi que le jeune écrivain Anatol E. Baconski partira en Bulgarie accompagné par Dumitru Corbea pour le neuvième anniversaire de la « Libération de la Bulgarie »[31]. Corbea, dont le nom ne dit aujourd'hui plus rien à personne, était un communiste de longue date, arrêté en 1937 et 1940, ayant fait son début en 1929 avec des *Poésies patriotiques* (Sasu 2006 : 382).

Précédés donc par ces courtes biographies envoyées au pays voisin, les écrivains préparent leur voyage plus ou moins sérieusement, en lisant des matériels de propagande sur le pays d'accueil. Avant son départ pour Sofia, A. Sütő reçoit par exemple de l'IRRCS des ouvrages sur l'histoire de la langue bulgare et de la documentation sur les « réalisations » de la littérature parue après le 9 septembre. Les autorités n'oublient pas non plus de lui mettre dans les bagages des matériels de propagande sur la Roumanie populaire et de petits cadeaux qu'il offrira à ses hôtes bulgares : des objets symboliques représentant la spécificité roumaine (nappes et napperons populaires, de la céramique) tout comme, communisme oblige, des signets de lecture rouges[32] ! De la même manière, les écrivains rentrent dans leur pays avec des matériels de propagande et de la littérature du pays visité. A titre d'illustration pour le canon littéraire de l'époque et pour sa circulation dans les « pays frères », les bulgares Petrov, Tzatchev et Stefanov reviennent de leur visite en Roumanie avec des œuvres des classiques roumains agréées par le pouvoir en place (des poésies de Coșbuc et Mihai Eminescu) et quelques productions exportables (Popa : 2003) de la « nouvelle littérature » du moment, tels le roman *Mitrea Cocor*

de Mihail Sadoveanu, des poésies de M. Banuş, le roman *Drum fără pulbere* [*Chemin sans poussière*] de P. Dumitriu, qui fait l'apologie de la « grande réalisation » de l'époque socialiste, le Canal Danube-Mer Noire (objectif inscrit sur l'itinéraire des visites des écrivains bulgares), *Acier et pain* de Ion Călugăru, tout comme des volumes de « critique littéraire » signés par les idéologues du parti, tel celui de I. Vitner sur « le problème de l'héritage littéraire »[33].

Forgeons une littérature digne des temps héroïques passés et présents !

Pour le déroulement des visites, les pays communistes mettent en place partout des circuits-types[34] qui « tournent à la démonstration », selon l'expression de Kupferman (1979). Sauf que dans les années 1950 la conception de ces circuits représente un vrai casse-tête : la réalité socialiste est souvent plus triste qu'on ne veut le montrer et les documents roumains montrent comment des équipes de l'IRRCS se déplacent dans le pays à la recherche des « objectifs » qui puissent s'inscrire dans l'image idéalisée que l'on veut transmettre à l'extérieur[35].

Les itinéraires comprennent donc des objectifs similaires : pour les écrivains, les sièges des institutions littéraires avant tout et, socialisme oblige, des fabriques, kolkhozes, quartiers et logements d'ouvriers, écoles ou hôpitaux ; dans l'esprit du même souci de transmettre « une image positive » du pays, on prévoit des rencontres des invités avec les stakhanovistes qui vont leur parler, en Roumanie et en Bulgarie, de leur vie meilleure de l'après-guerre et de leur enthousiasme de construire le socialisme[36]. Les lieux symboliques communistes n'y manquent pas : le Mausolée de Dimitrov en Bulgarie[37] et la prison-musée de Doftana en Roumanie, où Gheorghiu-Dej et ses camarades avaient été incarcérés. Les écrivains invités voient aussi des musées, vont à des spectacles et font des excursions dans les endroits touristiques célèbres (Plovdiv, Tarnovo, Varna entre autres, en Bulgarie, Sinaïa, Predeal ou Brasov en Roumanie). Partout les écrivains ont droit au même discours « sur les grandes réalisations » livré par des guides-interprètes[38], instruits à les faire « croire plutôt que voir » (Mazuy 2002). Les circuits essaient en quelque sorte d'effacer les différences entre les pays et, paradoxalement, de mettre en avant en même temps les spécificités nationales. D'ailleurs une délégation culturelle roumaine en Bulgarie souligne cet aspect dans son rapport de visite :

« Dans les collectifs artistiques d'amateurs et de professionnels on met beaucoup l'accent sur le folklore. Dans tous les musées on insiste sur la lutte du peuple bulgare pour la libération et sur les aspects de la culture bulgare de sorte que parfois on verse dans le chauvinisme »[39].

Pour les Bulgares et les Roumains deux objectifs se distinguent sur ces circuits de visite : les endroits liés au séjour de Khristo Botev en Roumanie où il a trouvé refuge dans sa lutte contre l'occupation ottomane de son pays, d'une part, et les villes de Pleven, Grivitza et Pordim, d'autre part, endroits liés à la lutte commune des Bulgares et des Roumains entre 1877 et 1878 contre les Ottomans pour la conquête de leur indépendance, obligatoirement visités par tous les Roumains en Bulgarie.

Sur les traces de Botev « le grand révolutionnaire et poète bulgare qui a vécu sur la terre roumaine les années les plus braves et les plus prolifiques de sa courte vie »[40]

Que ce soient l'Ecole bulgare à Bucarest « dont la cave conserve les traces de l'époque où Kh. Botev y avait son imprimerie », l'église et l'école bulgare de la ville de Galati, les maisons l'ayant accueilli dans les villes d'Alexandria et Braïla, avec surtout l'auberge où le révolutionnaire a trouvé abri, tous ces lieux évoquant le passage de Botev en Roumanie font parties des arrêts obligatoires des invités bulgares[41].

Parfois les écrivains sollicitent eux-mêmes ces visites dans des buts de recherche pour de futurs ouvrages et biographies de Khristo Botev, mais dans les années 1950 la déception des invités bulgares est immense devant le désastre qu'ils y trouvent :

> A Galati, à l'école dans laquelle Botev avait habité on a préservé les locaux et quelques objets de son époque, mais ils sont détériorés et négligés. Camarade Bélev a été très mécontent, surtout que la veille on avait organisé un bal dans les pièces où Botev avait habité et on n'avait pas nettoyé après. Il a promis de demander de l'aide de la part de l'Etat bulgare ; à Braïla nous avons visité l'immeuble qui allait devenir le musée Botev. Tout était abîmé. Camarade Bélev s'est plaint qu'ils ne soient pas aidés par la Direction des bâtiments culturels, dit la guide de Bélev[42].

Même chose à Alexandria, même année 1951 : Bélev est cette fois-ci en compagnie de l'écrivain roumain E. Camilar. Il trouve « de la bonne

documentation », est content d'avoir retrouvé deux des maisons où Kh. Botev avait habité et qui, de plus, conservent les meubles de l'époque. Le bonheur s'arrête cependant là : le musée de la ville est « dans un état indescriptible, des livres par terre, des bustes cassés, pleins de poussière ». Camarade Bélev « étant d'une nature impulsive », selon la guide, « s'est mis à crier disant que c'était une sauvagerie de laisser de tels documents dans cet état »[43].

La situation ne semble pas être meilleure en 1954 : le Musée Botev de Braïla n'est pas encore ouvert au public ; qui plus est, il n'est même pas « organisé » : « Le directeur du musée ne s'en occupe pas du tout. La bibliothèque non plus n'est pas arrangée et fait preuve d'une faible préoccupation de la part des employés. Selon moi, dit le guide d'une délégation bulgare, on n'aurait pas dû visiter Braïla si on était au courant de la situation »[44].

Les documents bulgares montrent qu'en 1957, enfin, les choses commencent à s'inscrire dans la bonne voie – les écrivains bulgares y sont probablement pour quelque chose par les alarmes sonnées de retour chez eux - car la Bulgarie passe à des actions concrètes pour la conservation de la mémoire de Botev en Roumanie : elle envoie de la documentation pour les musées et les bibliothèques, de la littérature pour le cercle littéraire *Khristo Botev* de Braïla et une nouvelle délégation bulgare y arrive pour prendre en mains la situation liée au Musée de Botev[45].

De toute façon, célébré d'une part, négligé de l'autre, Botev reste un sujet permanent des échanges entre les Roumains et les Bulgares.

« Gloire éternelle au trompette Furtuna ! Sur les traces de l'infanterie roumaine à Pleven, Grivitza et Pordim »[46]

> *Et Grivitza, tous m'ont demandé :*
> *L'as-tu jamais visitée ? (A. E. Baconski)*[47]

De la même manière que leurs confrères bulgares allant sur les traces de Botev, les écrivains roumains ne manquent pas de visiter au Sud du Danube des endroits symboliques de la lutte commune des Roumains et des Bulgares pour la conquête de leur indépendance. Ainsi, Cosașu, Baconski, Corbea et d'autres visitent-ils les mausolées de Pleven et Grivitza, les redoutes de cette dernière et Pordim avec son musée consacré aux

soldats roumains. Ils les célèbrent ensuite dans des poésies, telle *A Grivitza* de A. E. Baconski. Pour ce qui est des rapports de visite, les écrivains se déclarent enthousiasmés…surtout par l'accueil de la population locale : « Nous avons visité Grivitza et Pordim où les habitants apprenant qu'on venait de Roumanie nous ont accueillis avec beaucoup de chaleur, avec des fleurs et des brioches »[48].

En fait, de petits bémols sont à y mettre aussi, selon le rapport d'une délégation culturelle roumaine en 1954[49]. Tout d'abord il faut amender les peintures murales du Mausolée de Grivitza : « Nous proposons que les murs intérieurs du Mausolée de Grivitza sur lesquels étaient peints les portraits de Carol et Elisabeth, dissimulés maintenant par des draperies de velours, soient couverts de scènes de guerre, éventuellement des tableaux de Grigorescu. »

Et comme au Musée de Pleven « il n'y a rien qui rappelle la contribution du peuple roumain à la défaite des Turcs », les membres de la délégation proposent la réalisation d'une anthologie en bulgare « comprenant des morceaux littéraires de nos écrivains qui décrivent les luttes de 1877-1878 ».

« Les messagers de la révolution culturelle du pays voisin et ami »

Censés être des messagers de « la révolution culturelle » de leur pays, les écrivains sont tenus également de s'impliquer dans la vie littéraire et culturelle du pays d'accueil lors de leur séjour. Ils transmettent ainsi par le biais des entretiens, articles, conférences ou interventions à la radio le point de vue de leur pays sur des problèmes littéraires, débattent avec leurs confrères des pratiques littéraires, de la nouvelle littérature et du rôle de l'écrivain citoyen. Ainsi, pendant son séjour en Roumanie, le bulgare Emil Stefanov donne plusieurs conférences : à l'UER à Bucarest et à sa filiale à Cluj, à l'Université hongroise de Cluj, tout comme dans la ville de Braïla sur l'écrivain bulgare Ivan Vazov[50]. A. E. Baconski et Dumitru Corbea sont invités à leur tour par O. Vassilev à la rédaction de *Litératouren Front* à Sofia, où Corbea publiera un article à l'occasion du 9e anniversaire de la « Libération de la Bulgarie »[51]. A. Sütő écrit pour le même journal un article sur les succès de la nouvelle littérature roumaine[52]. E.T. Petrov visite lui aussi l'UER à Bucarest où il rencontre ses confrères roumains M. Davidoglu, Banuș, E. Frunză, Crohmălniceanu et A. Sütő : ils débattent

ensemble de l'état de la littérature roumaine contemporaine ; Petrov écrira, à son tour, un article sur la poésie bulgare contemporaine pour *Gazeta Literară* de Bucarest[53]. Kh. Bélev, enfin, donne un entretien pour *Tânărul scriitor* où il fait part de bonnes pratiques de son pays concernant l'aide accordée aux jeunes écrivains : en Bulgarie, dit Bélev, les jeunes écrivains sont conseillés par les écrivains plus âgés au sein des cercles et cénacles littéraires qui portent les noms de ces derniers[54].

La formation des jeunes écrivains fait, en effet, l'objet d'une attention particulière. Tout au long des années 1950, des structures littéraires sont étudiées lors des visites en vue d'un possible transfert d'expérience dans le pays d'origine : les écrivains bulgares accordent ainsi un intérêt accru à l'Ecole de Littérature « Mihai Eminescu », fondée à Bucarest afin de former « des écrivains nouveaux », tout comme son modèle soviétique de l'Institut M. Gorki de Moscou (Bîlbîie 2004, Dragomir 2004). L'Ecole est d'ailleurs inscrite dans le circuit général des visites pour les invités des « pays frères ». On retrouve ainsi Kh. Bélev en visite à cette école, accompagné par l'écrivain tchèque V. Zavada (lui aussi hôte de l'IRRCS). Bélev y « manifeste un vif intérêt, posant beaucoup de questions sur l'organisation de l'école. La visite a eu le caractère d'un échange d'expérience », conclut le guide ; et d'ajouter : « Dans les discussions avec les élèves, camarade Bélev a raconté des épisodes de sa vie »[55]. (Les épisodes racontés par Bélev concernaient, le plus probablement, ses années en prison en tant que militant illégaliste du PC.)

Les écrivains sont dès lors un lien entre les espaces littéraires des deux pays. Et ils s'avèrent encore plus utiles lorsque leur séjour est plus long : ainsi le bulgare K. Tzatchev, qui reste plus longtemps en Roumanie car il veut apprendre le roumain pour devenir traducteur ; il y reçoit une lettre de *Litératouren Front* bulgare qui lui demande, d'une part, d'écrire des articles et un reportage sur la Roumanie et « les manifestations de chaleureuse amitié de son peuple à l'égard de la Bulgarie et de son parti et à l'égard de Dimitrov », sur « les impressions de la jeunesse roumaine », sur les livres bulgares traduits en roumain, leurs tirages et, là encore, « des impressions » et, d'autre part, d'obtenir « des articles des écrivains roumains célèbres » sur les réalisations et les faiblesses de la littérature roumaine contemporaine pour un numéro spécial sur le 10e anniversaire de la « Libération de la Roumanie », tout comme des poésies « vraiment représentatives de la création roumaine non seulement du point de vue politique, mais aussi séduisantes par leur beauté [!] »[56]. On pourra observer dans cette lettre de 1954 (une année après la mort de Staline),

à part la langue de l'époque, les pas timides des écrivains bulgares vers une reconquête relative de l'esthétique[57].

Artistes citoyens, les écrivains s'impliquent aussi dans des discussions sur les aspects politiques et socio-économiques de leurs pays et, plus largement, de la région. Voici Sütő en Bulgarie, en véritable « ambassadeur » de la politique roumaine :

> A la rédaction du journal *Za cooperativno zemedelie* j'ai eu une conversation sur les problèmes de l'agriculture bulgare et en RPR. Cette rencontre a été très utile pour moi car j'ai beaucoup appris de l'expérience de la presse bulgare. Parlant de nos succès dans l'agriculture, j'ai informé les camarades journalistes bulgares de nos problèmes actuels, des décisions de notre gouvernement et de notre parti relatives au développement de l'agriculture[58].

Il publie dans le même journal bulgare deux articles écrits pendant son séjour dans le pays voisin : il y traite du développement de l'agriculture roumaine et des progrès du régime de Bucarest concernant l'amitié entre le peuple roumain et les minorités nationales[59].

« Une amitié inoubliable »

Les visites sont en même temps à la base des relations informelles entre les écrivains, voire des amitiés. Roumains et bulgares soulignent souvent dans leurs rapports à quel point cet aspect peut mener à de bonnes relations entre eux et, en fin de compte, entre leurs pays. Les sorties en dehors du cadre formel, les soirées moins contrôlées (et souvent bien arrosées), les excursions avec leurs confrères et les invitations « chez quelque écrivain ami » au-delà du Danube sont toujours appréciées par les écrivains comme les points forts des visites[60]. En outre, ces rencontres peuvent mener à des résultats attendus par les dirigeants littéraires. C'est ce que montre le secrétaire de l'UEB, Anguel Todorov, dans un texte intitulé *Trois poètes roumains* (il y fait référence à N. Cassian, V. Tulbure et C. Drăgoi).

> Quel plaisir, quelle joie de pouvoir sentir la beauté enivrante d'une grande poésie nationale ! Nous autres, Bulgares et Roumains, libérés et libres, nous nous liâmes d'amitié, les écrivains de deux pays, eux aussi. Plusieurs écrivains roumains visitèrent la Bulgarie ; les écrivains bulgares se

rendaient eux aussi comme des hôtes de leurs confrères de là-bas. Durant ces journées d'amitié inoubliable [...] on questionnait, on s'informait[61].

C'est ainsi que Todorov commence son texte qui, au-delà des clichés et enjolivures, raconte comment « les sorties autour d'une table de restaurant jusque tard dans la nuit en parlant littérature » ou l'excursion sur le Danube organisée par les Unions des Ecrivains des deux pays ont mené à de belles amitiés et ont porté leurs fruits. Bulgares et Roumains écrivent des poésies dédiées au « pays frère » : Nina Cassian, parmi d'autres, publiera le volume *Dialogul vântului cu marea* [*Le dialogue du vent avec la mer. Motifs bulgares*] dédié « à la Bulgarie, à notre vie, à l'héroïsme des militants antifascistes bulgares », comme le dit Todorov. Des traductions de deux littératures sont aussi en train de paraître : à part les trois poètes roumains mentionnés ci-dessus, Beniuc sera lui aussi publié à Sofia sous le titre *Trubadur na novi vremena* [*Troubadour des temps nouveaux*][62]. Pour n'y ajouter qu'un seul exemple : Baconski va dédier lui aussi une poésie – *Place 9 Septembre* - à l'écrivain L. Stantchev qu'il a rencontré lors de sa visite en Bulgarie[63].

On ne pourra pas dire toutefois à quel point ces volumes dédiés au pays frère sont issus d'une vraie envie d'écrire ou d'une contrainte, car à la fin de la visite, une fois chez eux, les écrivains sont tenus de publier des articles et ouvrages ou de donner des conférences sur le pays visité. Beaucoup d'écrivains bulgares et roumains accomplissent ce devoir ou s'engagent à le faire dans leurs rapports de visite. Ce sont, certes, des articles sur l'amitié, sur la littérature roumaine et bulgare, des poésies dédiées au pays visité comme celles mentionnées plus haut, des reportages sur des coopératives agricoles et usines et parfois des récits de voyage. Il va de soi que tous sont pleins d'éloges.

« Et pourtant, à part Caragiale ?! »

Malgré ces publications et en dépit des déclarations publiques enflammées, derrière les échanges et les rencontres littéraires entre les Bulgares et les Roumains, on constate également certaines tensions, des mécontentements et surtout beaucoup de difficultés pratiques, les premières années. Les documents internes, dont notamment les rapports des guides-interprètes et les rapports de visite des écrivains, en parlent souvent.

Tout d'abord, les points inscrits dans les Conventions de coopération culturelle ne sont pratiquement jamais accomplis entièrement : on traduit beaucoup moins que les plans annuels prévoient, les anthologies réciproques de poésie et prose font l'objet de discussions interminables et mettent des années avant de paraître ; des problèmes d'acheminement des livres, journaux et matériels nécessaires à l'organisation d'une manifestation littéraire ou politique sont souvent invoqués (ils arrivent souvent tard, voire trop tard pour être utiles), les visas d'entrée en Roumanie s'accordent difficilement.[64]

Quant aux itinéraires proposés, malgré l'attention accordée par les autorités à leur conception, sur le terrain il y aura souvent des imprévus : à part les problèmes liés aux transports, hôtels et restaurants (pénurie d'automobiles, mauvais services, additions surchargées), les invités n'hésitent pas à faire des commentaires devant leurs guides sur les « aspects négatifs » observés dans le pays voisin. Le bulgare Kh. Bélev, on l'a déjà vu, compte parmi les plus critiques. Il est surpris de constater aussi les mauvaises conditions des foyers pour les enfants des ouvriers, il se déclare « affligé par les enfants maigres et mal habillés » d'un village et, en bon communiste, attire l'attention sur les faiblesses dans l'organisation des parcs et musées roumains : il fait des commentaires critiques sur la présence d'une église dans le parc sportif de Cluj et remarque en même temps l'absence des panneaux montrant que ce parc appartient au peuple ; dans un musée centré sur « la lutte révolutionnaire du peuple » il donne libre cours à une tirade digne d'un internationaliste :

> Il a remarqué que le musée était incomplet, dit le guide, qu'il ne rendait pas toute la lutte du peuple et a demandé avec insistance quelles étaient les raisons pour lesquelles les camarades Dimitrov et Kolarov n'apparaissaient nulle part dans le musée, car eux aussi avaient eu un rôle dans le mouvement ouvrier en Roumanie où ils étaient venus comme des réfugiés politiques[65].

En effet, les invités sont moins « dociles » qu'on ne se serait attendu, puisqu'il s'agit toutefois des « camarades fidèles », vérifiés et recommandés par les autorités du pays de départ. Certains considèrent le programme comme trop « rigide », d'autres ne montrent pas l'intérêt attendu devant des fabriques et kolkhozes ou autres écoles spéciales dont le nombre inclus dans les circuits met à l'épreuve la patience des écrivains, fussent-ils des communistes ; parfois l'architecture bucarestoise ou les sites culturels

bulgares l'emportent dans leurs préférences. Il arrive dès lors que les écrivains négocient leur programme ou font recours à des stratégies pour « tromper » les guides, essayant de contourner l'itinéraire proposé : « J'ai été obligée à plusieurs reprises », dit la guide de Bélev, « de l'attendre à l'hôtel, alors qu'il était déjà parti se promener tout seul, préférant admirer l'architecture dans le quartier de Cotroceni ou le Parc Bonaparte où il avait remarqué de belles maisons » [66]. « Après le voyage de six jours à travers la Bulgarie », raconte à son tour Radu Cosașu, « il fallait aller deux jours au monastère de Rila. Motivant que j'avais vu très peu de choses, camarade Belkovsky a essayé de me convaincre de renoncer à Rila pour aller voir les usines de Dimitrovo, qu'il avait ajoutées au programme. J'ai décidé d'aller un seul jour à Rila et de visiter le lendemain Dimitrovo et le barrage de Studena. Pour ces deux jours, camarade Belkovsky a donné à mon guide un programme par heures ayant l'air d'un programme de caserne, rigide »[67].

Cosașu déplore aussi le contrôle des contacts avec la population locale : « Je n'ai pas connu de plus près des ouvriers bulgares. Mon guide, malgré ses qualités, se montrait assez pressé quand j'essayais de parler avec les ouvriers et les paysans. Je lui ai fait remarquer cela aimablement, mais les choses ne se sont pas vraiment améliorées » [68].

En effet, les itinéraires sont conçus pour éviter les rencontres fortuites et les guides sont là pour s'en assurer. Malgré leur vigilance, il arrive toutefois que des « éléments ennemis », des ouvriers qui parlent le bulgare, le russe, voire le français, déplorent devant un invité bulgare leurs conditions de travail[69].

En même temps, malgré les impressions générales positives sur leur visite, plusieurs écrivains regrettent les faibles contacts, voire l'absence d'intérêt réel de la part de leurs confrères du pays voisin : *« De ma visite en Roumanie »*, dit par exemple Emil Tomov Petrov, « je garderai pour toujours des souvenirs ineffaçables. Je suis tombé encore plus amoureux de la culture roumaine, j'ai connu les meilleurs exemples de l'art impressionnant de Roumanie. J'ai vu les grandes réalisations de la nouvelle Roumanie. Je recommanderais pour l'avenir que les écrivains qui visitent la Roumanie soient accompagnés par un ou deux écrivains roumains pour qu'ils se connaissent mieux. A part les deux rencontres officielles que j'ai eues avec les écrivains roumains et à la rédaction de *Gazeta Literară*, j'ai été très déçu de n'avoir pas eu la possibilité de connaître plus directement les écrivains roumains. Une telle connaissance aurait été extrêmement profitable pour nous, tout comme pour les écrivains roumains »[70].

Baconski et Corbea expriment le même mécontentement « devant le manque d'intérêt de l'UEB pour leur présence » à Sofia. L'UEB s'absente aussi à la réception donnée par l'Ambassade Roumaine à Sofia le 30 décembre 1952 pour le 5e anniversaire de la RPR. Corbea et Baconski, qui venaient d'arriver à Sofia, comptaient parmi les invités. « Monsieur l'Ambassadeur et tout le personnel diplomatique se sont montrés un peu vexés », note le guide bulgare des écrivains roumains[71].

Enfin, plusieurs invités soulignent que les deux peuples connaissent très peu la littérature de l'autre pays[72]. R. Cosașu le note dans son rapport de visite en 1954 : « En Bulgarie notre culture est peu connue, surtout la nouvelle. Le citoyen bulgare ordinaire a entendu à peine parler d'Eminescu, Caragiale est largement connu par « Une lettre perdue». Mais à part Caragiale[73] ? »

Une amitié sincère sans trop de pompe

Quoi qu'il en soit, par ces voyages, les écrivains roumains et bulgares se sentent renforcés dans leur position « d'ingénieurs de l'âme », selon la célèbre formule de Staline. Les voyages complètent la liste des privilèges dont ils disposent en tant qu'« artistes d'Etat » (Haraszti 1983). Non seulement ils sont logés aux meilleurs hôtels et les *per diem* sont plus que suffisants[74], mais les médias parlent d'eux pendant les visites, ils sont accueillis avec « des fleurs et brioches » par une population « enthousiaste » (comme le rapportait Sütő), les visites mènent souvent à la traduction de leurs ouvrages, les spectacles d'après leurs pièces de théâtre se jouent dans le pays voisin en leur présence[75]. Tout cela donne l'impression que leur prestige ne fait qu'augmenter au-delà du Danube.

Malgré certains mécontentements de deux côtés, les deux pays ont développé une intense activité dans la première décennie et il semble que les rencontres entre les écrivains roumains et bulgares se déroulent mieux que les échanges avec les autres confrères de l'Est. Les facteurs qui pourraient l'expliquer sont multiples et exigent une analyse approfondie. On pourrait toutefois mentionner le contexte politique interne, les réactions similaires des écrivains face aux contraintes politiques (il suffit de penser à l'effervescence de 1956 au sein des Unions des Ecrivains polonaise et hongroise pour regagner leur droit à la liberté de création face à la modération de leurs institutions-sœurs bulgare et roumaine[76]) ou les événements historiques communs. Quoi qu'il en soit, les rapports

de visites, en dépit des critiques et suggestions, regorgent en général de superlatifs. Certes, nous l'avons souligné, ces rapports répondent avant tout à une contrainte administrative imposée par des organismes subordonnés politiquement et sont truffés de clichés de l'époque, mais l'enthousiasme des appréciations des écrivains roumains à l'égard de leur accueil au Sud du Danube est rarement rencontré dans les rapports qu'ils dressent au retour d'un autre « pays frère » : ils apprécient surtout la « familiarité et la chaleur » des Bulgares, « leur amitié sincère », l'accueil dépourvu de « caractère officiel et de pompe » et de « phrases protocolaires artificielles »[77]. Les rapports des Bulgares ayant visité la Roumanie ne sont pas différents.

On pourrait toutefois se demander si les efforts d'organiser ces rencontres et l'investissement des autorités communistes des deux pays ont eu les résultats escomptés. Les documents laissent voir que les visites « de popularisation » ne sont souvent que des « échanges formels », quand ce ne sont que des visites touristiques. Qu'en est-il de la réalité de ce projet de « communauté littéraire socialiste » censée mener à une véritable connaissance réciproque des pays et de leurs littératures ? Qu'en est-il de la réception de la « nouvelle littérature » de l'autre côté du Danube ? Il est important à cet égard de rappeler la question de Cosașu : *Et pourtant, à part Caragiale ?*

Quelques décennies plus tard, les archives, tout comme les témoignages des écrivains laissent voir que la question est encore valable. Selon Sântimbreanu (2000 : 97-99, 159), en 1984, le Bureau de l'UER concluait que la littérature des pays voisins était très peu connue ; Sântimbreanu lui-même, auteur de littérature pour enfants, ancien éditeur et secrétaire de la section de littérature pour les jeunes, avouait après 1989 qu'il n'était pas capable de mentionner un seul nom de grand écrivain bulgare (ou polonais) de littérature pour enfants. Il connaissait quelques noms des Russes !

NOTES

[1] Je reprends ici le terme de « circulations horizontales » utilisé par Kott et Faure (2011 : 5) pour désigner les circulations entre les pays satellites, par rapport aux « transferts verticaux » de l'URSS vers les « démocraties populaires ».

[2] Nous avons fait une analyse générale des rencontres littéraires entre les pays communistes in Dragomir (2017). Le présent article se propose d'aller plus loin par l'analyse plus approfondie des rencontres bilatérales, dans un premier temps, entre la Roumanie et la Bulgarie. Pour une étude plus large et nuancée, les échanges culturels entre les « pays frères » mériteraient l'attention d'une équipe internationale.

[3] Pour une discussion sur cette notion couvrant une construction artificielle en fin de compte, voir, parmi d'autres, les contributions au numéro « Le Bloc de l'Est en question », *Vingtième Siècle* et notamment la « Présentation » de Kott et Faure (2011 : 3-9). Voir aussi l'analyse de Bazin (2017).

[4] On a signé le Plan de travail pour l'Accord culturel hongrois-roumain, le 8 juin 1951, dos. II A Ungaria 438 : 58, Fonds IRRCS, ANR. J'ai choisi de traduire en français les titres des documents roumains et bulgares.

[5] Dates des accords et conventions culturelles, dos. II A Iugoslavia 330 : 335, Fonds IRRCS.

[6] Comme le montre aussi un article récent (Stratone : 2020) basé principalement sur les archives de l'institut roumain.

[7] Les travaux de la Commission mixte/Sofia, 1953, dos. II A Bulgaria 76 : 268-269, Fonds IRRCS.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Dos. I A 5/ 1949-1952 : 99-106, Fonds IRRCS.

[10] A titre d'illustration, l'ouvrage de P. Vintilă, *Nepoții lui Horia [Les Neveux de Horia],* qui fait l'objet des « modifications » en Roumanie, est interdit de publication en 1953 en Bulgarie : dos. Bulgaria 76 : 191-192, *ibid.* et vol. 2, dos. 39 : 223- 242, Fonds BGK. De la même manière, l'IRRCS annonce au MAE que certaines pièces de théâtre de L. Demetrius, V. Eftimiu, L. Fulga et T. Vornic avaient été exclues du répertoire des théâtres roumains, « donc elles ne peuvent plus être recommandées pour la traduction ». MAE devait le transmettre aux ambassades roumaines dans des « pays frères ». Note de l'IRRCS, le 1er août 1958, dos. I A 52/1958-1959, Fonds IRRCS.

[11] Les archives roumaines et bulgares sont pleines de tels exemples : Dimitrov, Gheorghiu-Dej, tout comme les voïvodes Mircea le Vieux ou Etienne le Grand sont célébrés en égale mesure de deux côtés du Danube. Vol. 2, dos. 159, parmi d'autres, Fonds BGK.

[12] Le 23 Août en RPB, 1952, dos. Bulgaria 68 : 188-192, Fonds IRRCS.

[13] Document envoyé par l'IRRCS au BGK, le 22 sept. 1954, vol. 2, dos. 160 : 52-53, Fonds BGK.

[14] *Ibid.*

15   Pour une discussion récente sur le concept d' « écrivain national », voir Thiesse (2019).

16   Par exemple, pour le centenaire de la naissance d'Ivan Vazov, l'IRRCS et l'UER organisent des conférences et lectures de son œuvre, tout comme des « vitrines littéraires » et publient des articles dans la presse ; on en parle aussi à la radio et les Editions d'Etat publient un recueil de poésies de l'auteur célébré. Dos. Bulgaria 68 et 69, Fonds IRRCS ; les Bulgares répondent de la même manière pour les festivités dédiées au poète roumain Mihai Eminescu : par exemple, vol. 2, dos. 157, Fonds BGK.

17   RPB. Compte rendu de presse/1952, dos. Bulgaria 68 : 188-191, Fonds IRRCS.

18   Plan pour la mise en application de la Convention… entre la RPR et la RPB, mai 1950/mai 1951, *source citée*.

19   Le tableau contient les noms que j'ai trouvés jusqu'à présent par une analyse croisée des sources. On observe une absence des visites des écrivains roumains en Bulgarie en 1958 et 1959. Cela est dû parmi d'autres au fait que l'IRRCS subit des restructurations et les échanges culturels connaissent un processus de décentralisation : à partir de 1957 les conventions culturelles prévoient des échanges directs entre les Unions des Ecrivains ; dans la deuxième moitié des années 1960 elles vont signer des protocoles séparés : par exemple, Convention de coopération entre l'UER et l'UEB pour l'année 1966, Archives de l'UER. Pour plus de détails, voir Dragomir (2007 et 2017). On verra aussi le profil des écrivains changer (Dimitar Dimov, D. Gabé et A. Blandiana comptent parmi les écrivains qui visitent le pays voisin les décennies suivantes).

20   UEB, Télégramme de salut pour la fondation de l'UER, dos. 75, Fonds Mihai Beniuc, ANR.

21   Lettre de remerciement de M. Beniuc à l'UEB, 1959, *ibid*. Pour plus de détails sur le rôle de G. Karaslavov, en tant que protégé de T. Jivkov, dans l'espace littéraire bulgare, voir Metodiev (2017).

22   Rapport [du guide] sur la visite dans notre pays de l'écrivain Kh. Bélev, dos. Bulgaria 73 : 45-49, Fonds IRRCS.

23   Rapport de Sara Garti (responsable bulgare des échanges avec les « démocraties populaires ») à l'attention du président du BGK, le 15 avril 1957, vol. 5, dos. 57 : 77 et aussi : 74-75, Fonds BGK.

24   RPB. Compte rendu de presse/1950, dos. Bulgaria 68 : 359, 361, Fonds IRRCS. *Rabotnitchesko Délo* est, tout comme son homologue roumain *Scânteia*, le quotidien du PC.

25   Note du BGK à l'IRRCS, le 29 avril 1953, vol. 2, dos. 38 : 145, Fonds BGK.

26   Cassian (2003 : 158) ; le 31 mai 1957 elle notait dans son journal l'enthousiasme de partir en Bulgarie.

27   Membres UER, Cluj : http://www.uniuneascriitorilor-filialacluj.ro/detalii_membrii_643_MIRCEA-Dumitru.html, consulté le 31 mai 2021 ; Note du

BGK adressée à l'IRRCS, vol. 2, dos. 158 : 21, 31 ; vol. 4, dos. 90/1956 : 56, Fonds BGK.

28   In vol. 2, dos. 39/1953 : 175-176, Fonds BGK.

29   Dos. Bulgaria 73 : 83, Fonds IRRCS.

30   Données biographiques. Emil T. Petrov, vol. 2, dos. 165 /1954 : 6, Fonds BGK.

31   Rapport de la Commission Relations Internationales de l'UER/1953, dos. I A 16, Fonds IRRCS.

32   András Süto, Rapport sur mon voyage en Bulgarie, le 14 juin 1954 ; Documentation prêtée à l'UER et cadeaux donnés à Süto, dos. Bulgaria 78 : 185-186, 193, 195, *ibid.* Süto

33   Matériel offert à E. Stefanov, le 2 juin 1951, dos. Bulgaria 73 : 86 ; Matériel à envoyer en RPB par le délégué E. T. Petrov, le 12 juin 1954, Liste du matériel donné au camarade K. Tzatchev, le 4 juin 1954, dos. Bulgaria 78 : 14, 16, *ibid.*

34   A propos de ces trajets « cosmétiqués » en URSS voir, parmi d'autres, Cœuré et Mazuy (2012), Mitchievici (2011), Paul Hollander (2017).

35   Dos. I A 13/1951-1956, Fonds IRRCS.

36   Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.* Rapport sur la visite de D. Corbea et A.E. Baconski en Bulgarie, vol. 2, dos. 41 : 221-235, déc. 1952/ janv. 1953, Fonds BGK.

37   « Haut lieu de pèlerinage » à l'époque communiste (Dobre 2011) ; voir aussi, pour les débats autour de ce monument après 1989, Gradev (1992) et Déyanova (1997).

38   Les guides-interprètes sont choisis, certes, parmi des personnes « fiables » et consigneront dans des rapports le déroulement des visites. Ces documents, conservés dans les archives de l'IRRCS et du BGK, ont été très utiles pour la présente analyse ; quant aux guides eux-mêmes, nous n'insistons pas ici, car nous leur avons consacré une analyse : « Liberté d'expression, censure et autocensure chez les guides-interprètes roumains dans les années 1950 » (à paraître in *Analele Universității din București*).

39   Rapport de visite de la délégation culturelle roumaine en RPB, dos. Bulgaria 78/1954 : 110-111, Fonds IRRCS.

40   Célébration du centenaire de la naissance de Botev en RPR, le 6 déc. 1948, dos. Bulgaria 68 : 152-154, *ibid.*

41   Rapports sur la visite des écrivains Kh. Bélev, E. Stefanov ; note du 26 mai 1951, dos. Bulgaria 73 : 45-49, 81-82, *ibid.*

42   Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.*

43   *Ibid.*

44   Rapport de visite de la délégation culturelle bulgare, le 7 juillet 1954, dos. Bulgaria 78, cit. : 67-70.

45   Note du BGK, vol. 5 dos. 42, 1957 : 23, Fonds BGK.

[46] Extraits des « Notes de voyage » du sculpteur militaire roumain M. Butunoiu, *Apărarea Patriei*, le 25 juillet 1954, conservées par les archives bulgares : vol. 2, dos. 159/1954-1955 : 120, *ibid.* ; le trompette roumain Furtuna est, selon l'historien A. Pippidi (2013), consacré héros de 1877 (et de 1907) par la mythologie communiste ; en effet, il est également le personnage du film *Nepotii gornistului [Les neveux du trompette]* qui passe aussi en Bulgarie : Rapport sur la visite de la délégation de la cinématographie roumaine pour la semaine du film roumain en RPB, le 16 juillet 1954, dos. Bulgaria 78, cit. : 128 -135 et vol. 2, dos. 156 : 54, Fonds BGK.

[47] « La Grivita » [« A Grivitza »], *Almanah literar*, Cluj, no. 5, mai 1953, p. 21 (ma trad.).

[48] A. Sütő, Rapport de visite, *source citée*.

[49] Rapport de visite de la délégation culturelle roumaine, 1954, *source citée*.

[50] Note, le 22 mai 1951, dos. Bulgaria 73 : 80, Fonds IRRCS.

[51] Rapport sur la visite de D. Corbea et A.E. Baconski, *source citée* ; UER, Rapport à l'attention de l'IRRCS pour l'année 1953, dos. I A 16, *ibid.*

[52] A. Sütő, Rapport sur mon voyage, *source citée.*

[53] E. Petrov, Rapport sur la visite en RPR, vol. 2, dos. 165 /1954 : 13-14, Fonds BGK.

[54] Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.*

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Lettre du 2 juillet 1954, dos. Bulgaria 78 : 11, Fonds IRRCS.

[57]   Pour une discussion sur le réalisme socialiste en Bulgarie, voir Doynov (2015) et aussi Miguev (2001).

[58] A. Sütő, Rapport sur mon voyage, *source citée.*

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] *Ibid.* ; R. Cosasu, Observations sur le voyage en RPB entre le 8 et le 24 septembre 1954, dos. Bulgaria 78 : 142-144, Fonds IRRCS ; Rapport sur la visite de D. Corbea et A.E. Baconski, *source citée*; Anguel Todorov, *Trois poètes roumains* (en français dans l'original), dos. 75 : 4-9, Fonds M. Beniuc.

[61] A. Todorov, *Trois poètes…*, *source citée.*

[62] *Ibid.* ; Lettre de Todorov à M. Beniuc : 2-3, 11, Lettre de M. Beniuc à Todorov, dos. 75 : 12-13, Fonds M. Beniuc.

[63] *Almanah literar*, 1953, *source citée* : 17.

[64] Voir, par exemple, Séance de travail, sept. 1949, dos. I A 5 et les rapports sur l'accomplissement des Plans de travail/1953 entre les deux pays, dos. Bulgaria 76 : 231- 254, Fonds IRRCS ; et aussi les notes du BGK à l'attention de l'IRRCS, vol. 2, dos 158/1954 : 3, 62 et vol. 6, dos. 43/1958 : 41, Fonds BGK.

[65] Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.*

[66] *Ibid.* Ce comportement n'est pas singulier. Des écrivains roumains faisaient la même chose en URSS, dont Blandiana (2020 : 34-36) ou M. Preda : le

Fonds M. Beniuc contient des documents liés à sa visite en URSS en 1962 (dos. 59 : 32-41). Pour les visites en URSS, voir aussi Mazuy (2002 : 120).

[67] R. Cosașu, Observations …, *source citée.*

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.*

[70] E. Petrov, Rapport sur la visite en RPR, *source citée.*

[71] Rapport sur la visite de D. Corbea et A.E. Baconski, *source citée* : 222-224 ; Programme pour D. Corbea et A.E. Baconski, vol. 2, dos. 41 : 216-220, Fonds BGK.

[72] Rapport sur la visite de Kh. Bélev, *source citée.*

[73] R. Cosașu, Observations…, *source citée.*

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] C'est par exemple le cas d'Orlin Vassilev qui est présent au Théâtre Nottara de Bucarest pour la mise en scène de sa pièce *Bonheur*. Ordonnance du Conseil des Ministres, le 5 janvier 1955, vol. 5, dos. 156 : 58, Fonds BGK.

[76] Comme nous l'avons montré in Dragomir (2007).

[77] Les rapports de R. Cosașu et A. Sütő, *source citée* ; Rapport d'une délégation de cinéastes, dos. Bulgaria 78 : 134, Fonds IRRCS.

Abréviations

IRRCS - Institut roumain pour les relations culturelles avec l'étranger
BGK – Comité bulgare pour l'amitié et les relations culturelles avec l'étranger
UE – Union des Ecrivains ; UER – Union des Ecrivains de Roumanie ; UEB - Union
    des Ecrivains Bulgares
MAE – Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
RPR - République Populaire Roumaine
RPB - République Populaire Bulgare
PCR – Parti Communiste Roumain
PCB – Parti Communiste Bulgare

Fonds d'archives

Archives de l'Union des Ecrivains de Roumanie (non –inventoriées)
Archives Nationales de Roumanie (ANR) :
Fonds Institutul Român pentru Relaţii Culturale cu Străinatatea – IRRCS [Institut
    Roumain pour les Relations Culturelles avec l'étranger]
 Fonds Mihai Beniuc
Archives Centrales d'Etat de Bulgarie : Fonds Български комитет за приятелство
    и културни връзки с чужбина *(Balgarski Komitet za priatelstvo i kulturni
    vrazki s tchujbina)* [Comité bulgare pour l'amitié et les relations culturelles
    avec l'étranger]

Bibliographie :

BAZIN, J, « Provincialiser Moscou dans les études sur le communisme », *Studia Politica*, no.1, 2017, pp. 25-35

BÎLBÎIE, R, *Istoria unui experiment eșuat*, Societatea Scriitorilor Militari, București, 2004

BLANDIANA, A, *Soră lume*, Humanitas, București, 2020

CASSIAN, N, *Memoria ca zestre*, Editura Institutului Cultural Român, București, vol. I, 2003

COEURE, S, « Les voyages entre l'URSS et l'Occident : quelle histoire transnationale ? », *Les Cahiers Sirice*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2016, pp. 119-126.

COEURE, S et MAZUY, R, *Cousu de fil rouge : voyages des intellectuels français en Union soviétique*, CNRS Éditions, Paris, 2012

CÂRSTEAN, S, COSAȘU, R, « Interviu cu Radu Cosașu », *Observator cultural*, no. 66, 29.05 2001

CRĂCIUN, V, POPESCU, C, (ed), *Marin Preda. Creație și morală*, Cartea Românească, București, 1989

DEYANOVA, L, « The Battles for the Mausoleums. Traumatic Places of Collective Memory » in COENEN-HUTHER, J, (éd.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, Nova Scientia Publishing House, New York, 1997, pp. 175-186

DOBRE, C-F, « Les combats mémoriels du postcommunisme bulgare : Le communisme et ses monuments », *Anuarul C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor*, Craiova, 2011, pp. 227-245

DOYNOV, P, "The Sovietization of Bulgarian Literature and the 'Bulgarization' of Socialist Realism", *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2015, pp. 333-345, https://www.ejournals.eu/Studia-Litteraria/2015/Issue-4/art/7185/

DRAGOMIR, L, *L'Union des Ecrivains. Une institution littéraire transnationale à l'Est : l'exemple roumain*, Belin, 2007

DRAGOMIR, L, « Rencontres littéraires. Echanges, incompréhensions et tensions entre les écrivains des "démocraties populaires" dans les années 1950 », *Studia Politica*, no. 1, 2017, pp. 111-129

DRAGOMIR, L, « L'écrivain de parti : l'École de littérature et critique littéraire Mihai Eminescu », *Studia Politica*, vol. 4, 2004, pp. 873-884

GARRARD, J, C, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union*, Collier Macmillan Publishers, New York, 1990

GRADEV, V, « Le mausolée de Dimitrov » *Communications*, 55, 1992. « L'Est : les mythes et les restes », coord. BROSSAT, A et POTEL, J-Y, pp. 77-88

HARASZTI, M, *L'Artiste d'État : de la censure en pays socialiste*, Paris, Fayard, 1983

HOLLANDER, P, *Political Pilgrims. Western Intellectuals in Search of Good Society*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2017

KOTT, S, FAURE, J (éd.), « Le Bloc de l'Est en question », *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 109, janv-mars 2011

KUPFERMAN, F, *Au pays des Soviets. Le voyage français en Union soviétique, 1917-1939*, Julliard, Paris, 1979

MARES, G, *Literatura română în spaţiul ceh sub regimul comunist*, ALL, 2013

MAZUY, R, *Croire plutôt que voir ? Voyages en Russie soviétique 1919-1939*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002

METODIEV, M, *The Writers, the Conflicts and Power in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia 1948-1968*, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2017, http://theses.gla.ac.uk/7858/

MIGUEV, V, *Balgarskite pisateli i polititcheskiat jivot v Balgaria* (1944-1970), Kota, Sofia, 2001

MITCHIEVICI, A, *Umbrele paradisului. Scriitori români şi francezi în URSS*, Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2011

MOCANU, M-R, *Cazarma scriitorilor (documente),* Bucureşti, Libra, 1998

NEGURA, P, *Ni héros, ni traîtres. Les écrivains moldaves face au pouvoir soviétique sous Staline*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2009

PANOVA, L, *L'Union des écrivains bulgares pendant la période communiste : enjeux et stratégies littéraires*, DEA, EHESS, Paris, 2001

PIPPIDI, A, « Numele străzilor », *Dilema veche*, nr. 514, 19-23 dec. 2013

POPA, I, « Le réalisme socialiste, un produit d'exportation politico-littéraire », *Sociétés & Représentations*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2003, pp. 261-292

POPA, I, *Traduire sous contraintes. Littérature et communisme*, 1947-1989, Paris, Ed. CNRS, 2010

SÂNTIMBREANU, M, *Carnete de editor*, Amarcord, Timişoara, 2000

SASU, A, *Dicţionarul biografic al literaturii române (A-L)*, Paralela 45, 2006

SELEJAN, A, *Literatura în totalitarism 1949-1951*, Thausib, Sibiu, 1994

STRATONE, C, « Cultural challenges for Romania and Bulgaria at the beginning of the Cold War Institutions and means for cultural propaganda », *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 3-4, 2020, pp. 91-104

THIESSE, A-M, *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique*, Gallimard, Paris, 2019

VAISSIE, C, *Les ingénieurs des âmes en chef. Littérature et politique en URSS (1944-1986)*, Belin, Paris, 2008

ANDRADA ISTRATE

Born in 1987, in Galați

Ph.D. in Sociology, University of Bucharest and l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2018)
Thesis: *The Making of a Postsocialist Fact - Caritas and Mutual-Aid Games, Romania, 1991-1995*

Sociologist

Research grant
CEREFREA (Centre Régional Francophone de Recherches Avancées en Sciences Sociales)

Among the recent projects
Governing the commons: climate change, irrigations, and cooperation in southern rural Romanian communities. Project coordinated by Cristina Brădățan
The Ethnography of the Prisoners' Transitions. Project coordinated by Ioan Durnescu

Participation to conferences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Germany, Portugal, and Romania

Publications in sociology, criminology, and public policy

AN ARRANGEMENT OF DISTRUST: THE BANKRUPTCY OF CARITAS AND MUTUAL-AID GAMES IN ROMANIA (1992-1995)

Abstract

This paper tells the empirical story of how the mutual-aid game (or pyramid or Ponzi scheme) Caritas, went bankrupt, after having acquired nationwide success. I reassemble this story through participants' testimonies and mass media accounts, focusing on the role of the written press in fabricating, that is, representing, predicting, and announcing its demise. Curiously enough, the written press announces the failure of the game at a point where it is most successful - that is, after Caritas relocates from Brașov to Cluj-Napoca, operates multiple branches, and animates millions of Romanians into pilgrimage to a city frequently compared to a financial Mecca, Maglavit or El Dorado. I explore the rhetoric strategies used in shaping mutual-aid bankruptcy, examining how something that has not (yet) happened is organized so as to appear impending. Bankruptcy is assembled by portraying Caritas as "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966), an alien element that disturbs the peace and serenity of a city formerly known for its university campus and intellectual life. Furthermore, illegality is forged out of ambiguity. Since there are no provisions specifically outlawing mutual-aid games in general, journalists try to undermine them as particular cases. Lastly, the use of numbers completes the rhetoric of bankruptcy. Most accounts include numerical and non-numerical formulations of the size of the mutual-aid phenomenon, presenting very precise numbers of depositors, deposits, victims, or financial damage. I highlight the paradox of precision as being more rhetorical than informative.

Keywords: mutual-aid game; pyramid and Ponzi scheme; financial fraud; bankruptcy; numbers

Between the years 1992 and 1995, the mutual-aid game[1] (or pyramid or Ponzi scheme) Caritas was more than a topic a discussion. Caritas insinuated itself into the everyday life of people, their conversations, exchanges, and sociality. "Wherever you'd go," one of my interlocutors recalls, "you'd hear stories about Caritas, in the factory, everywhere really. People wouldn't greet you on the street and ask how you were. No way. Conversations went like this: *Good afternoon, which position are you on the list? Are you playing?*" (Lucia 2016). Caritas is recounted by eyewitnesses to the long queues in their neighborhoods or streets, their friends and acquaintances who allegedly shifted the wheels of fortune in their favor, and the endless rumors circulating at the workplace. Others remember working in factories and organizing among colleagues to wait in line to deposit money, or having the foreman collect and deposit for the entire work collective. Inasmuch as it was thought to be mysterious and unpredictable, Caritas was unavoidable.[2]

I do not mean to advocate that people were instantly seduced and convinced by the possibilities opened by rapid fluctuations of fortune. Quite the contrary. Mutual-aid games in Romania were highly controversial affairs. They were discussed, debated, advertised, mathematically debunked and economically exposed, their political endorsements revealed, described as a "social phenomenon" or a downright "psychosis". All unfolded publicly, under the watchful eye of the mass media. Many people recall not only the heated public debates, but also the fierce arguments in their families about traveling to Cluj-Napoca to deposit money at Caritas. When the side more prone to risk or willing to take a chance won, savings were mobilized under the hopeful phrase: "we can't be the first to lose!" Some sold livestock, apartments and goods; others borrowed money or pawned items and deposited in spite of the many critiques brought on by the mass media. To further complicate the story, more and more voices made their way to the public scene. As mutual-aid games began to collapse one after the other, newspapers not only announced the imminent collapse of Caritas, but also mobilized numbers and accounts coming from institutions such as the Inspectorate of Police and the Direction for Public Finance, sought decisions from Courts of Justice, and unveiled the hidden connections Caritas and Ioan Stoica, its owner, were thought to have. Caritas was no longer a business promising incredible returns (eightfold money multiplication within three months), but one associated with the political power in Cluj-Napoca, where former *Securitate* members and officials of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR)

were said to be on the shortlist of overnight money multiplication. Besides its seemingly surreal object of activity, Caritas was permeated with rumors, gossips, and conspiracies about its shady endorsements, as well as moral panics about the potentially harmful effects of its collapse.

This paper follows the chained bankruptcy of mutual-aid games around the country, focusing on the role of the written press in fabricating, that is, representing, predicting, and announcing their demise. I am interested in the rhetoric strategies at work in shaping mutual-aid bankruptcy. What are the symbols of collapse and how are they mobilized in order to convince others that collapse is imminent? How is knowledge about mutual-aid games produced and what are the procedures that make it appear factual? And lastly, how is something that has not happened (e.g., the collapse of Caritas) organized so as to appear impending?

Caritas is Matter out of Place

The story I tell starts from the confrontation between *Tribuna Ardealului* (TA), a periodical positioned against the local political establishment and *Mesagerul Transilvan* (MT), a newspaper close to Cluj-Napoca prefecture, which is the main advertisement and communication medium for Caritas. All accounts published by the TA indicate that Caritas is "matter out of place". Mary Douglas coins this phrase that comes to have a very long career in reference to purity and dirt. Dirt is, according to the anthropologist, matter out of place, and people's references to dirt imply the existence of "a set of ordered relations" and "a contravention to that order" (Douglas 1966: 36). As such, "dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (*idem*). There are two ways through which journalists describe Caritas as matter out of place, one metaphorical, alluding to the deleterious moral consequences, and another factual, which shows the actual dirt produced by Caritas and its depositors.

Caritas invites chaos. Black marketers, beggars, thieves, empty bottles and tons of litter, public urination, fights and brawls and overnight lines are the first signs of disorder. At the end of March 1993, Caritas moves its headquarters from the former Prefecture in Cluj-Napoca, where it functioned since its relocation from Brașov, to the Cluj-Napoca Sports Hall, a state-owned building which can host up to 3,000 people at once. This is when critics argue that generalized disorder ensues. An important

mention should be addressed: Caritas deposits are no longer restricted to residents of the city, as was the case up to that point. More and more people from all over the country travel to Cluj-Napoca, either by car or train, the written press circulating figures ranging between 7,000 and 10,000 visitors a day. Some claim that not only money enters the city, but also dirt:

> The hysteria caused by getting rich will produce an explosive exodus to Cluj, overcrowded trains, blocked roads, the Transylvanian city invaded by desperate people wanting to escape poverty (*Libertatea*, August 10-11, 1992).

> At every hour of the day or night, the space surrounding the Cluj-Napoca Sports Hall resembles a giant fair. The parking lot is packed to capacity with cars from all the counties of the country. On the Someș Riverbank, hundreds of people eat, drink or just sleep. Day and night, several vans serve sausages, beer, and juice, when, in fact, all that is transacted is money (Nițu 1993).

> The heart of Transylvania became a pesthole. Thousands of people, garbage and dirt took over, it smells of piss even though everybody knows money has no smell (Capital, September 17, 1993).

The long lines and the presence of money also occasion the proliferation of the new characters of postsocialism, entrepreneurs who "redefine the boundaries of exchange" (Carruthers and Espeland 1998: 1035) in relation to Caritas. Cluj abounds in entrepreneurial responses to Caritas in several ways. First, the city becomes a key destination for other mutual-aid games such as Rolex, Flash, Help, Replay, Kokte and Roba Co Roba. The TA relentlessly prints warnings for citizens: "[w]e remind you that to the present day, these types of firms are not allowed, probably because of the precedent set in the country, by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Cluj, which denies their registration. Until now, hundreds of similar firms were closed and many of their owners were arrested for fraud" (TA 31(263), February 16, 1993). Despite the insistence of local publications in reminding people that mutual-aid games are not legally authorized in Cluj-Napoca, they will continue to function and make profit during the following months.

Second, the city becomes host to a variety of informal economies and business initiatives, copiously referred to as "Caritas fauna". I give a few examples. The Messenger taxi[3] has the Caritas logo on its doors

and guarantees Caritas "lucky winners" safe travels (*România Liberă*, May 15-17, 1993). A pawnshop advertises as lending money for Caritas deposits (*Adevărul* de Cluj, September 18-20, 1993). The long lines for deposits, between 24 and 72 hours, make room for the emergence of "fast depositors", who, in exchange of a fee of up to 10% of the deposit will wait in line or use their connections to make fast Caritas enrollments (*Adevărul*, August 10, 1993). Monetizing the generosity of participants once they cashed in their winnings, beggars from other cities move to Cluj-Napoca, to the point of forcing the City Hall to issue regulations against begging (*România Liberă*, July 9, 1993; July 19, 1993). The city becomes a key destination for thieves, waiting, as well as others, for their big break. And lastly, there are a few cases of Caritas cashier impersonators, who forge signatures, receipt, and company seals, tricking prospective participants into depositing with them (TA, October 7, 1993).

The dirt and the "fauna" contradict the image people from Cluj have of their city. Time and time again, questions about what happened to "the heart of Transylvania" (*Libertatea*, August 10-11), the "capital of Transylvania", or "the university town and the cultural center" (TA, September 17, 1993) that used to be Cluj-Napoca before Caritas surface and are left unanswered. The juxtaposition has the character of a breaching experiment (Garfinkel 1967a), as it reveals a supposedly shared notion of social order before Caritas. One of my interviewees, a student in Cluj at the time, phrases it better, highlighting the toxic effects the game had on the city:

> The town was becoming very interesting. All of a sudden, there was constant commotion. It was crazy to be there at lunch… Cluj is an extremely beautiful town, with the university at its core, a lot of young people in the city center, the high schools, the schools, the university… Suddenly, people were ageing. […] Around the old town square there were these state-owned shops that still functioned: the supermarket, the central store. All were depleted. Everybody was racing around the shops that sold long-term products: carpets, television sets, fridges. It was crazy, everywhere people were carrying something. It was a period, a flux of merchandise, something I had never seen before… All the prices were through the roof, including the student cafeterias. As a student you no longer had access to this area of services, it was complicated because it was packed. And it was almost impossible to travel to and from Cluj, it was simply too crowded. […] All of a sudden, my feeling was of something intoxicating in the city, I couldn't recognize it any longer, I couldn't find it.

> Moreover, everybody talked about it, everybody. Think about it, it was an epoch when people won a great deal of money, a lot of young people won a lot of money, prices were through the roof, apartments were through the roof, cars became an extremely expensive matter, everything was oversized in the city (George 2013).

During all this time, Stoica travels constantly between Brașov and Cluj-Napoca, making himself seen also in Turda and Dej, where Caritas branches were operating, to issue payments. His decision to settle in Cluj comes when he realizes he needs to be seen in order to be trusted: "I realized people wanted to see me, that's when they trust Caritas. My absence from Cluj is not beneficial, and [*I say this*] because I heard people in line spreading all sorts of rumors about Caritas, but especially about me." Moreover, referencing a woman who allegedly warns him, Stoica mentions her saying that "people are crazy. They talk so many things about you; you don't know what to say any more. It seems to me that there are some people who want to demean you, they may even be paid by someone who has a shady interest" (Stoica 1996b: 197). Retrospectively, Stoica well understands that Caritas is getting out of his hands. As voices multiply, Stoica can no longer be in control of how the situation is defined. He spends the first few months of 1993 asking people to maintain order or reassuring them of the lack of contingency guaranteed by his business. During this period, Stoica does not generate messages on behalf of Caritas, but fends off attacks coming from rival publications, especially the TA and *România Liberă*, one of the national publications with a wide readership. At the same time, he spends time correcting spontaneous rumors circulating on Caritas premises, assuring his depositors that he will be moving his business neither back to Brașov, nor in Gherla, or that no one associated with Caritas will go on vacation.

Romania Outlaws Millennial Capitalism...

... but not mutual-aid games. TA's campaign against mutual-aid games is based on the claim that Caritas should not function in Cluj-Napoca. To prove their claim, the TA resorts to a juridical argument about the legality of the game in the city. Nevertheless, there is no law provision that directly prohibits the development of mutual-aid games. The Commercial Code drafted in 1990 specifically outlaws several activities but makes

no mention of mutual-aid games. Among the activities that cannot be organized through private initiative in small firms or familial enterprises I mention the production and marketing of explosives, poisons, narcotics, and secret remedies (witchcraft and fortunetelling), the establishment of brothels, gambling, and speculative commerce (see Annex 1 of the 54/1990 law decree).[4] Part of the lexicon of millennial capitalism, these activities are termed by Comaroff and Comaroff (1999; Comaroff 2000) as occult economies. At the turn of the millennium, Comaroff postulates, capitalism manifests itself messianically, positing consumption over production, placing gambling and speculation at "the fiscal heart of the nation state" (2000: 297), and the conjuring of wealth through techniques that "defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason" (2000: 310). With no law provision for or against mutual-aid games, debates about legality or lack thereof had to be rhetorically constructed by appealing to issues related to definition, framing or opinion from alleged experts.

One of my interlocutors, a Chief of Police in Eastern Romania at the time, resorts to the absence of legislation or, as he terms it, the legislative vacuum, to stand as an explanation for the proliferation of mutual-aid games. His account, however, is part of a vocabulary of motives (Mills 1940), a justification for the lack of police action in regulating the emergence and spread of similar activities. Law enforcement, he argues, was in the line of least resistance:

> There were not and there still aren't in our judicial system any provisions against [mutual-aid] games. If citizens participated willingly, there was nothing we could do. "It was my turn to get my money, and they skipped me, they didn't pay", [*he says imitating the protesting voices of the victims*] only then was it possible for us to demonstrate crimes incriminated by our criminal code, namely to treat them as fraud and embezzlement. But until then, mutual-aid games were not crimes per se (D.C., 2014).

Referencing Caritas, all newspapers mention that the game is registered in Brașov, therefore having no business being in Cluj. All accounts come from the TA (and later republished or referenced in all my sources). They rely on expert voices from the Registry of Commerce in Cluj-Napoca, Public Finance or invoke a Supreme Court ruling against one similar business to function in Cluj-Napoca. Nevertheless, a closer look at the statements of these "competent describers" (Potter 1996: 150) shows them denying their authority and competence in regulating and overseeing the establishment

and functioning of mutual-aid games. They deliver personal opinions which journalists later treat as facts. I show below all the instances when an expert voice is consulted regarding mutual-aid games:

(1) The General Inspectorate of Police, Braşov: These games could be run based on a set of regulations where the sums, the firm's commission etc. should be clearly stated. The game Cronos[5] does not have the set of regulations registered January 1991, when it should have been, but in May 1991 (TA 190, October 28, 1992).

(2) The Supreme Court of Justice, extracted from the Public Prosecutor's charge: The activity for financial mutual-aid cannot be done through acts of commerce, for it is not a bank, but it is neither an insurance activity. Thus, the Court erroneously allowed the firm The Society of Monetary Help Rodoet Cluj to function. Financial mutual-aid cannot be done through acts of commerce [The extract is followed by a commentary by the TA]: Considering these aspects, we can logically extrapolate: all similar firms function illegally. But still... (TA, April 14, 1993).

The request to register the firm The Society of Monetary Help Rodoet Cluj was rejected by the decision No.31/1991 in the meeting of the Counsel Chamber, November 15, 1991, by the judge [full name enclosed]. The appeal was denied [full names of all the members present enclosed] (TA, October 30, 1992).

(3) The National Office of the Registry of Commerce: By the decision 181/1992, gambling was regulated – its judicial nature, provisions for functioning and sanctions. Although these mutual-aid games presuppose the enrollment of people on a random basis, through their very name, I consider they are not to be included in the gambling category. Supporting this point of view, I highlight the numerous frauds and complaints coming from participants. Eventually, "collective mutual-aid games" might be enrolled as part of the activities, provided a set of regulations approved by the Commission established by the decision 181/1992 is elaborated, and participation is restricted to a limited number of people (TA, November 2, 1992).

 (4) The general director and the deputy general director of the Direction for Public Finance: We could not verify the legality of the firm being registered, because it is not within our competence. [...] There is also a big issue related to how the VAT is applied, which imposes a strict definition of activities. So, from our point of view, there are ambiguities relating to the activity of Caritas. It's not gambling, because there is no chancy element involved, it's not a crediting operation that would function as a bank, it is

> an activity that has not yet been defined. [...] From a legal point of view, Caritas is perfectly legal. We cannot find anything else (TA, June 3, 1993).

> (5) The Chief of Police, Cluj-Napoca: I personally consider this game [Caritas] to be immoral (TA, June 19, 1993).[6]

Several aspects of these accounts are worth analyzing. Although the TA posits these statements as factual evidence supporting the illegality of mutual-aid games and especially Caritas, none of them clearly state that they are illegal. Quite the contrary, statements 1, 3, and 4 support the legality of Caritas and mutual-aid games. They raise technical issues that need resolving (e.g. the existence of a set of regulations), or were found absent in games that went bankrupt, as was the case with Cronos. The only account clearly outlawing mutual-aid games is the one coming from the Supreme Court of Justice, which, nevertheless, only provides local coverage. The Court does not settle the mutual-aid game affairs throughout the country but refers to one particular game that cannot function in Cluj. Providing only local coverage, the decision of the Court opens avenues for contestation – how can mutual-aid games function in other cities, who is responsible for their registration, and if mutual-aid activities cannot carry on, how do they, in fact, do?

Furthermore, the absence of legislation is made evident by the efforts the invoked experts make to place mutual-aid games in a category (1, 2, 3, 4). Because they cannot find a reliable category for these businesses, they categorize by exclusion. While readers cannot know what mutual-aid games are, they can surely find out what these activities are not. Thus, mutual-aid games are not banks and are not insurance companies (2, 4), are not gambling, nor do they offer credit (4). The most reliable account states that Caritas is immoral, to be sure of yet another ambiguity. Despite the legal ambiguity, Caritas manages to function in many cities through branches, retaining its bookkeeping in Brașov. Because of this legal artifice, whenever financial control institutions would check the firm's accounting details, they would either deem its legality or their impossibility to control outside jurisdiction.

The last point I make is related to the devices of distance the experts use to renounce accountability. Except for the statement by the Supreme Court of Justice,[7] all other representatives of an institution use several strategies to minimize their competence and involvement. The statement by the General Inspectorate of the Police leaves room for interpretation,

as the representative expresses his position in conditional form: "games could be run," instead of a more definitive one. The National Office of the Registry of Commerce advances a similar point of view, which abounds in terms that denote opinion: "I consider [...]. Eventually, "collective mutual-aid games" [...] "might be enrolled". The last statement by the Direction for Public Finance clearly shows how their representatives renounce accountability. They "cannot verify" because it is not "within our competence", and close off by expressing a pertinent point of view, namely that "there are ambiguities". Despite the ambiguity, for the TA, the illegality of mutual-aid games is postulated as a fact. Factuality is assembled out of an abundance of personal opinions and various strategies of renouncing accountability, or in other words, different ways of saying "I don't know".

The Rhetorical Force of Numbers

I showed how personal opinion and definitions by exclusion are assembled into a rhetoric of facticity. This section analyzes the textual construction of scale. I am interested now in how practices of counting (games, victims, complaints, money) are mobilized into arguments about the dimensions of fraud despite the difficulty of counting and the absence of official records. No longer talking about particular cases of mutual-aid games, the press discusses "the mutual-aid games phenomenon", and, after Caritas, "the Caritas phenomenon". This signals a redefinition of the situation as a phenomenon, rather than a game or a business, which is more likely to invite usually deleterious consequences. In October 1993, Caritas interrupts payments for two days and, despite desperate attempts to relocate the business to Petroșani, Bucharest, Craiova, and Snagov, it never recovers. March through October 1993 newspapers build up the collapse of Caritas. Journalists report on the bankruptcy of mutual-aid games around the country as if predicting the imminent collapse of Caritas.

The first games to collapse are those from Brașov: Florio, Cronos, and Buzunarul Bunicii, all in October 1992. Writing about them triggers an avalanche of numbers: number of depositors, number of months the game functioned, number of victims, the total amount of capital gathered, the total amount of money defrauded, number of complaints filed, number of kilograms the file has, and the number by which money is multiplied. We find out that, in the case of Florio, its owner disappears with 6,5 million

that should have been paid to participants (TA, October 24, 1992). Cronos goes out with a bang of more than one billion lei cashed from 152,551 depositors, out of which only 42,631 winners were paid and the rest of 109,920 not (TA, October 29, 1992; *Libertatea*, January 30, 1993). For these two businesses, the files and complaints weigh 820 kilograms (TA, February 27, 1993). One of the most public collapses is that of a game from Ploiești. With 400,000 depositors and 340,000 victims, its bankruptcy leaves behind a 3,935,492,210 lei con and a 2,000-people protest (*Adevărul*, November 28-29, 1992; *Libertatea*, January 30, 1993). The 5,000 complaints sent through mail and the other 5,000 filed in person "suffocate" Police activity (TA, January 8, 1993). Another two mutual-aid games, Rolex and Flash, both based in Brașov but operating in Cluj-Napoca, crash, and the papers on which the complaints are written are said to be one meter tall (TA, May 8, 1993). In Brăila, Eastern Romania, the bankruptcy of a mutual-aid game named Adison causes a protest of 30,000 people who block the main road (*Adevărul*, January 12, 1993). *România Liberă*, a major player in the written press with a wide national readership publishes its first story about mutual-aid games on May 13, 1993. Under the title "Pirates of transition", the paper delivers a dry account, enumerating a long list of mutual-aid frauds, leaving numbers to speak for themselves. The article is an inventory of 17 mutual-aid games, the total amount of money defrauded and the number of victims. Another 107 mutual-aid games are said to be undergoing investigation (*România Liberă*, May 13, 1993).

On the other side of the interpretative spectrum, numbers are also mobilized not only for their descriptive purposes, but also for their rhetorical abilities. I show below a journalistic account more favorable to Stoica, as in this case, numbers denote the professionalism and expertise at play in his business. Besides the numbers released by Stoica, as many of them come from him, the journalist includes numbers of her own, which are used to describe the relative magnitude of the business. This article, which expresses a rather positive view of the game, goes unsigned, making it clearer that numbers speak for themselves. As such, readers find out that:

> Cluj-Napoca has a population of 455,000 inhabitants. Official sources confirm that the entire population participated to the financial circuit Caritas, from the tens of thousands of unemployed to local authorities. At this moment, a very high flux of people from the counties near Cluj, but also from other parts, is registered. They all come here with the hope of

getting rich. Ioan Stoica created a special donation fund where winners donate money for the development of the city. Although it is speculated that he made secret deals with the City Hall and the Prefecture his relationship with authorities is very discrete. [...] Out of the 773 employees, over 400 are cashiers, very young girls aged 16 to 25 years old. All the employees, besides the fact that they have an income (an average of 50,000 lei), are involved in the game and certainly have won very high amounts of money. The work schedule is exhausting, they work 12 hours a day with one-hour lunch break. The cashiers use computers (46) for deposits and payments (there are over 300 rooms where deposits are being made). [...] Calculating the winnings is done in a calculus center [...], which uses 80 computers to centralize the data received from Caritas. Every day, 20,000 receipts are printed (154,000 lei each) and that number will increase shortly. Ioan Stoica prepares the introduction of networked computers. Caritas cashes daily 5,2 billion and pays 4,1 billion, amounts which will obviously increase. Ioan Stoica retrieves a 10% commission, retrieves the VAT from the winnings and pays fantastic taxes. In April, he paid 300,000 million lei, only to reach in 70 days at 4,841,073,000 lei in taxes. In August, he will pay over 6 billion. These sums mean that until this moment, Ioan Stoica has a gross profit of over 20 billion lei (he reached 8 billion a month). Ioan Stoica confirmed that his bank account balance (no. 750 at the Agricola Bank) on July 29 was 15,461,177,143,48 lei (*Libertatea*, 1092 August 10-11, 1993).

It is striking that the numbers presented are very precise. The readers find out that there were "42,631" Cronos winners, or that the game from Ploieşti produced a fraud of "3,935,492,210" lei. They also find out the precise amount of money in Stoica's bank account, an impressive 15,461,177,143,48 lei. Why is it important for the reader to know the precise number, instead of, for instance "more than 42 thousand" "nearly four billion"? What are the roles of precision and quantification in delivering an argument or of presenting reality?

Jonathan Potter *et al.* (1991) deliver the now-classical argument on the quantification rhetoric. Analyzing the case of how cancer appears on television, the authors pay attention to the way in which numerical formulations are used in arguments of non-numerical nature, especially how this type of "factual discourse" is used as a rhetorical communication device aimed at "proposing and undermining argumentative cases" (1991: 336; 333). This framework is instructive for my analysis because it provides a counterargument to the aura of objectivity that numbers usually carry, showing, at the same time, that mathematical statements are "as much a legitimate target of sociological questioning as any other

item of knowledge" (Woolgar 1988: 43). We know of numbers that they are used to establish expertise, impose authority, show that knowledge is impersonal, and render certainty and universality to arguments (Porter 1996; Poovey 1998), firming them up through the stability of meaning (Carruthers and Cohen 2000). Quantification, in general, is regarded as an "impersonal, mechanical routine devoid of human emotion, desire, and bias" (Campbell 2000). In journalism, numbers contribute to an impression of nothing-but-the-facts journalism (Roeh and Feldman 1984). "Instead of thinking about quantitative accounts as accurate renditions of some putative reality", Potter *et al.* (1991: 337) argue, we should view them as designed for their "robustness in an argumentative arena".

Nevertheless, there is a disjuncture between what numbers do and what is counted and how. An entire line of work inspired by the ethnomethodological tradition shows the organizational processes involved in the production of records, statistics, and official data (see Potter 1996). By questioning official data, the ethnomethodological project questions the roots of sociology itself, particularly the taken-for-grantedness involved in Emile Durkheim's analysis of suicide. Discussing suicide statistics, Atkinson (1983) shows that the categorization of suicides in practice differs from that inscribed in official records. Coroners and their officers have different definitions of what counts as a suicide, assembled from "taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes a typical suicide" (141-142). Statistics, which are afterwards reproduced in a variety of settings, obscure members' methods in categorizing a death as a suicide. Aaron Cicourel (1974: 85) delivers a similar account showing how law enforcement agencies "make the system work despite many problems associated with classifying juveniles [...], offenses, family settings". The police, he argues, use a combination of tacit knowledge, personal observation and standardized questions mapped into "socially and legally relevant categories" (86). Similarly, the numbers surrounding mutual-aid games are terribly approximate and saturated with members' own methods of categorizations, as well as personal evaluations and judgment. To this date, there is a conspicuous lack of knowledge concerning the number of mutual-aid games in Romania, or at least those registered, number of Caritas participants or total financial damage.

When it comes to the total number of mutual-aid games operating in Romania, no one can give a number. The General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police declares in an interview after the fact:

> Officially in the country there were <u>about six hundred</u> [my emphasis, A.I.] mutual-aid circuits. Not all of them managed to function. The total effective damage produced by the crooks, the total number of those conned will never be known. Certainly, we're talking high numbers. The phenomenon is now known and… renowned for its maleficent consequences. Will it also determine the coming into force of a law as a shock treatment?

This statement reveals that even producers of classifications do not have a precise knowledge of the number of games functioning in Romania. The number remains unclear up to the present date; "about six hundred" is as clear as it gets. The pessimism that surfaces from this statement underscores the absence of official accountability, which marks not only mutual-aid games, but also the emergence of private initiative after socialism.[8]

The same goes for the number of Caritas participants, as observers circulate figures ranging from two to eight million depositors. Verdery (1995: 629) reports the same interval and is right to do since the number of depositors becomes subject to political rhetoric. These estimations mark an important turning point in the social career of Caritas, namely its qualification as a "social phenomenon". The Romanian Information Service (SRI) leaks a report that estimates the number of participants in 1993 around two million (Andronic 1993: 3). In this report, SRI refers to Caritas as a social phenomenon: "The massive participation of the population to the circuit (approximately 2 million depositors in 1993) denotes its transformation into a social phenomenon" (idem). The framing of Caritas as a phenomenon, realized through quantification rhetoric, brings the discussion towards the possible consequences of its collapse. The same reports states:

> Functioning with <u>spectacular</u> results for more than a year (despite the bankruptcy of similar firms), Caritas will mobilize through the temptation of winning <u>a very large number</u> of depositors from Transylvania, but also from other counties. Locally, because it facilitates obtaining <u>very large</u> amounts of money, it produces inflationist phenomena (the price of an apartment in Cluj-Napoca is already <u>the highest</u> in the country). In time, the inflationist phenomenon will be induced in <u>the entire</u> Transylvanian area and <u>the entire</u> country. The phenomenon of the absence of work, through the decrease of motivation in achieving honest earnings or displaying initiative in the case of private entrepreneurs, is accentuated. Stoica is rumored to transform his firm into a popular bank [...] and given <u>the high amount</u> of money circulated and professional incompetence or

some hazardous or deceitful operations, the future bank could create real difficulties for the national banking system. The most relevant conclusion is that interrupting the circuit through administrative measures can produce profound discontent for a large segment of the population [...], which could degenerate in social movements and protest (idem, my emphasis, A.I.).

The report itself does not rise to its hype. Announced in *Evenimentul Zilei* days ahead, and printed under the title "secret SRI report", it does not deliver too much information. Imprecision and lack of knowledge are obscured using non-numerical quantity formations. The report abounds in terms that refer to size and magnitude without telling the order of size. As such, spectacular results for a very large number of depositors from the entire country lead to inflation, lead to the explosion of prices in Cluj-Napoca, lead to people stopping working, lead to entrepreneurs lacking initiative, and finally may lead to discontent and protests. In some ways, non-numerical quantity formations are more politically inclined than numerical ones because they do not need a signifier or a context from which to extract meaning. Returning to an earlier example, one million can mean something in 1992 and, two years later, when inflation more than doubled reaching 256,1, an entirely different thing. Non-numerical quantity formations are more stable in meaning and interpretation and have the potential to fascinate or scare, depending on how one reads the situation.

Another statement comes from Romanian sociologist Achim Mihu (1993; 1994) who calculates the number of depositors at four million. In the absence of official records, he turns to mathematical inference: "according to Stoica's statements, in June 1993 alone, 1,109,000 people were enrolled on 6,892,811 game positions. This means, first, that during the most intense months, that is July, August, and September, Caritas could have enrolled over 3 million people" (1994: 108). The conditions of possibility that enable this research are intimately tied to Caritas, showing, at the same time Mihu's own positionality regarding the game. In November 1993, Mihu (1993; 1994) launches a sociological research about Caritas. Stoica uses the occasion to invoke the scientific research in some of his interviews or public talks, as proof of the solidity of his business. Contacted by Mihu, Stoica pledges his unyielding support in financing, or at least sustaining the research, yet he ends up ghosting the sociologist. Mihu nevertheless continues with his research and seeks help

from Mesagerul Transilvan, who publishes his questionnaire and later disseminates a part of the results.

At the beginning of November 1993, Mihu issues on the first page of MT a lengthy argument in favor of the need for scientific research on the topic of Caritas. Answering to an interview ran by a British television, Mihu ventures in explaining the success of Caritas. "Caritas is founded", the sociologist argues, "on the needs of a crowd of people who hope that by depositing a sum of money today they will obtain in a few months enough money to satisfy their daily needs, needs always adjusted and amplified by transition" (1993: 1-3). To his mind, transition equates with inflation, unemployment, poverty, as well as with the unbridled desire for wealth. He cites the unpublished research by two (unnamed) students who imaginatively survey the people queuing to deposit or cash in their winnings. They discover that for approximately 30% of the respondents, the winnings would be spent on immediate necessities. This only confirms Mihu's intuition that people's investment is in direct relation with poverty.

Further on, Mihu falls into the trap of functionalist thinking, by articulating the potential social functions of Caritas. "Caritas", he suggests, "could be thought of as an institution of charity or of social assistance, aiding the state and comforting a part of the population who might otherwise become socially turbulent." This type of reasoning is not only sociologically flawed, but also uncritically reproduces some of Stoica's earliest arguments in promoting his business: Caritas is a mutual-aid game that targets vulnerable and marginal groups ("needy people, retirees, and the handicapped"). In a similar way with the social functions of witchcraft among the Azande that Evans-Pritchard (1937) enunciates, for Mihu Caritas functions as a safety valve, as it takes potential social conflicts and redirects them towards a state of equilibrium.[9]

The social universe that Caritas populates can wobble at the workings of the press, who acts as an "ill-fated oracle", and journalists, the "parasites who undermine by mistrust" (Mihu 1993: 3). Via Max Weber, Mihu posits sociological (axiological) neutrality yet alleviates some of the discomforts associated with Caritas. "So far", he argues, "none of the depositors from Cluj-Napoca lost any money [...] there is risk, but what business is not subjected to risk, even to the risk of bankruptcy?" The potential negative effects of Caritas are associated with a proliferation of speculation and corruption, a negative influence on work and all other profitable/useful activities, as well as an effortless accumulation of capital, as if effortless translates necessarily as bad (idem).

Nevertheless, it is important to balance the pros and cons that Mihu enunciates. A careful examination of the two arguments shows that Stoica is not the only one to artfully manage scale: so is Mihu. The Janus face of Caritas contrasts structure and agency. Caritas brings about institutional and systemic benefits, sets in motion social institutions, and can repair and compensate the workings of the state. Individuals or social actors cannot be identified in Mihu's sketch of the social functions of Caritas, but they can easily be glimpsed in the potential dysfunctions. Caritas can produce a negative conception of work, but who, if not the people, are the ones that actually do the work? Who, if not the people, are the ones to engage in speculation and corruption, and who, if not the people, are themselves corrupted by easily accumulated capital? And who, if not the people, can accelerate its demise? A few months later, in 1994, Mihu publishes the results, thus allowing him for a more grounded explanation of Caritas. He inadvertently posits Caritas as a type of social magic and deems its workings as unworthy of attention. The question of how Stoica manages to pay eightfold, its "black box" or "secret" (1994: 108) is kept unanswered, as the sociologist redirects his attention to how "the circuit managed to attract 4 million depositors".

Caritas proponents[10] are more likely to invoke higher numbers of participants, to put forward the number of deposits instead of depositors or invoke the number of pages of winners published in the MT. This artifice can give an unrealistic portrayal of participation. For instance, in July 1993, 1,109,000 people enroll in the game on 6,892,811 positions (Mihu 1994: 108), meaning that each person enrolled on an average of six positions, or made six maximum deposits of 160,000 lei. Caritas proponents are more likely to equate the number of deposits with the number of depositors. I give two examples. Zamfirescu and Cerna (1993) and Smeoreanu *et al.* (1993) publish books in response to a TV show broadcasted on October 7, 1993 on national television, titled "What is the Caritas phenomenon and what are its effects?". Their approach is clearly defensive, trying to correct the myopias of the producers of the show who clearly depict it as a destructive scourge. Zamfirescu and Cerna (1993) argue that there are eight million Caritas participants and 40,000 millionaires solely in Cluj-Napoca. Their deposition continues by quoting Stoica's account regarding the VAT Caritas paid July through October 1994. Caritas is said to have paid "33,768,739,000" lei, a number which appears in bold, standing out in the layout of the page. To further add content to the number, they introduce an order of equivalence:

> The taxes paid by Caritas during only a third of a year were enough to cover almost completely the government's most urgent social [emphasis in original] expenses in constructions, for the entire country. We could think that in these times of austerity and poverty, it is precisely Caritas's contribution that allowed the government to launch this grandiose campaign to finish constructions and to erase from the country's landscape the bleak scenery of the abandoned blocks of flat left stranded after the death of Ceaușescu (Zamfirescu and Cerna 1993: 13).

The story ends with the collapse of Caritas. October 1993, the business interrupts payments for two days, blaming it on technical difficulties. Stoica tries to relocate his business to Bucharest, Craiova and Snagov, and fails spectacularly. He reduces the number by which winnings are multiplied from eight to four to two and increases the payout period. His attempts are in vain; Caritas never recovers. The police and investigators are left with the gruesome task of analyzing 40 million receipts issued by Caritas. In June 1994, all Caritas assets are seized and, two months later, Stoica is arrested.

NOTES

1   Different variants of Ponzi or pyramid schemes are documented all over the world, but sociological and anthropological studies remark their incidence in post-socialist, postcolonial or post-revolutionary contexts (see Verdery 1995; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Zuckoff 2005; Musaraj 2011; 2020; Frankel 2012; Krige 2012; Cox 2014). Their emergence and success have been interpreted as symptoms of the incapacity of the financial system to come up with viable crediting solution or to keep inflation within reasonable bounds; the impossibility of legislators to secure a feasible normative framework; a cultural deficiency rooted in the changing conception of money; or the result of political and governmental leniency.

2   In Romania there were approximately six hundred mutual-aid games. Assimilated to Ponzi and pyramid schemes, the games functioned according to a redistributive principle: people invested or deposited an amount of money and received it three-, five-, eight-, or elevenfold multiplied in a short period of time, usually no longer than three months. Initially established in Brașov in 1992 but relocated to Cluj-Napoca shortly after, Caritas eclipsed all other mutual-aid games in Romania in terms of number of participants, sums of money, but most importantly, visibility. The name "Caritas" is still used today, either as a generic term for similar businesses ("Caritas-type games") or to designate particular cases of fraud and hoax. Caritas is for Romania what Ponzi is for the United States.

3   In Romanian, "taxi Mesagerul", named after the newspaper *Mesagerul Transilvan*, a periodical intimately tied to Stoica and Caritas.

4   Although specifically prohibited, many of these activities accompany postsocialist imaginary and newspapers make frequent references to occult economies. To mention just a few: bio-energeticians proliferate, a leading figure being Constantin Mudava who claims to cure incurable diseases through energy fields; witches and fortunetellers thrive during the first years of transition, claiming to solve every problem, from disease and marriage, to Romanian tourism; people report miraculous healings and the translation of divine power onto rocks or pieces of wood, which animates religious pilgrimage to those specific areas; or the emergence of different impersonators, one of which, claiming to be the Orthodox patriarch managed to sell a cemetery in Bucharest (Militaru and Popa 1993).

5   Cronos is a mutual-aid game established in Brașov that will claim over 100,000 victims, see below.

6   The article is published on the front page of the newspaper and is followed by the ironic commentary: "but who cares now about morality?".

7   Unlike all other statements presented above, the one coming from the Supreme Court of Justice is not an account made to be shared with the public. In this case, the statement is made to appear as "recognizably coherent" and "professionally defensible" (Garfinkel 1974: 100).

8   One of my interviewees recounts starting a business in 1991: "we'd go to Constanța where there were these buses to and from Istanbul, we'd buy blue jeans, entire containers of jeans. In our accounting we'd register these customs papers, but it was all fuzzy... Nobody knew anything, yet the [economic] police would come and control our business, they'd get their bribes, and we'd go on with our business" (Petru 2021).

9   The central tenet of Evans-Pritchard's structural functionalism is that society is viewed as a somehow functionally integrated organism; in other words, society is made up of components with distinctive functions that, in order to perform, must work together. When something goes off the rail, society comes up with these mechanisms (such as witchcraft and oracles for the Azande and mutual-aid games for Romanians) aimed at amending the conflict and putting it into the larger framework of the system. Ultimately, it is belief that reinforces the existing social order.

10   The two accounts I invoke are clearly in defense of Caritas. Zamfirescu and Cerna's book is titled *The Caritas Phenomenon or Romanians' Salvation through Themselves,* and the one by Smeoreanu *et al.* (1993) *Caritas, the Radiography of a Miracle.*

Bibliography

Andronic, D., "Raportul SRI despre Caritas" *Evenimentul Zilei*, 423, November 10, 1993. [Inv English: The Romanian Information Service Report on *Caritas*].

Atkinson, J. M., *Discovering Suicide: Studies in the Social Organization of Sudden Death*, Springer, 1983.

Campbell, E., "The Rhetorical Language of Numbers: The Politics of Criminal Statistics", *Radical Statistics*, *75*, 55-66, 2000.

Carruthers, B. G., and Cohen, B., "Knowledge of Failure or Failure of Knowledge? Bankruptcy, Credit and Credit Reporting in the 19th-century US", *American Sociological Association Meetings,* Washington DC, 2000.

Carruthers, B. G., and Espeland, W. N., "Money, Meaning, and Morality", *American Behavioral Scientist*, *41*(10), 1384-1408, 1998.

Cicourel, A. V., "Police Practices and Official Records", *Ethnomethodology,* 85-95, 1974.

Comaroff, J. L. "Millennial capitalism: First thoughts on a second coming", *Public Culture*, *12*(2), 291-343, 2000.

Comaroff, J., and Comaroff, J. L., "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony", *American Ethnologist*, *26*(2), 279-303, 1999.

Cox, J., "Fast Money Schemes Are Risky Business: Gamblers and Investors in a Papua New Guinean Ponzi Scheme", *Oceania*, *84*(3), 289-305, 2014.

Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger*, New York, Routledge, 1966.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, London, Oxford, 1937.

Frankel, T., *The Ponzi Scheme Puzzle: A History and Analysis of Con Artists and Victims*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

Garfinkel, H., *Studies in Ethnomethodology,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1967.

Krige, D., "Fields of Dreams, Fields of Schemes: Ponzi Finance and Multi-Level Marketing in South Africa", *Africa*, *82*(1), 69-92, 2012.

Mihu, A., "Caritas, obiect de cercetare științifică", *Mesagerul Transilvan*, 813, November 5, 1993. [In English: Caritas: object of scientific research].

Mihu, A., "Fenomenul Caritas în contextul tranziției", *Revista de Cercetări Sociale* 3/1994: 107-120, 1994 [In English: The *Caritas* Phenomenon in the Context of Transition].

Militaru and Popa, "Dându-se drept patriarhul României, "Popa" Olivian a vândut cimitirul Bellu", *Adevărul*, 1065, September 25-26, 1993. [In English: Impersonating the Patriarch of Romania, "Minister" Olivian Sold the Bellu Cemetery].

Mills, C. Wright. "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive", American Sociological Review 5.6 (1940): 904-913.

Musaraj, S., "Tales from Albarado: The Materiality of Pyramid Schemes in Postsocialist Albania", *Cultural Anthropology*, *26*(1), 84-110, 2011.

Musaraj, S., *Tales from Albarado: Ponzi Logics of Accumulation in Postsocialist Albania*, Cornell University Press, 2020.

Porter, T. M., *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, Princeton University Press, 1996.

Potter, J., *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*, Sage, 1996.

Potter, J., Wetherell, M., and Chitty, A., "Quantification Rhetoric—Cancer on Television", *Discourse and Society*, *2*(3), 333-365, 1991.

Roeh, I., and Feldman, S., "The Rhetoric of Numbers in Front-page Journalism: How Numbers Contribute to the Melodramatic in the Popular Press", *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, *4*(4), 347-368, 1984.

Smeoreanu, G. *et al.*, *Caritas – radiografia unui miracol*, Rm. Vâlcea, Antim Ivireanu, 1993 [in English: *Caritas* – the Radiography of a Miracle]

Stoica, I., *Agonie și extaz (volume 1)*, Cluj: Transilvania Press, 1996a [in English: Agony and Ecstasy].

Stoica, I, *Agonie și extaz (volume 2)*, Cluj: Transilvania Press, 1996b. [in English: Agony and Ecstasy].

Verdery, K., "Faith, Hope, and Caritas in the Land of the Pyramids: Romania, 1990 to 1994", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *37*(04), 625-669, 1995.

Woolgar, S., *Science, the Very Idea*, Tavistock Publications, 1988.

Zamfirescu, D. and D. Cerna, *Fenomenul Caritas sau mântuirea românilor prin ei înșiși*, Bucharest, Roza Vânturilor, 1993 [in English: The *Caritas* Phenomenon or Romanians' Salvation through Themselves]

Zuckoff, M., *Ponzi's Scheme: The True Story of a Financial Legend*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005.

CIPRIAN JELER

Born in 1979, in Cluj-Napoca

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3 University and "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași (2009)
Thesis: *Le sujet et l'action. Essai sur l'ontologie du sujet et le rapport pratique à soi*

Researcher, Institute of Interdisciplinary Research – Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iași

Fellowships and grants:
*Postdoctoral fellowship, "*Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iași (2010-2013)
Fellowship, Institute for Research in the Humanities, University of Bucharest (2015)
Research grant, UEFISCDI – Research projects to stimulate young independent teams (2015-2017)
European Philosophy of Science (EPSA) Fellowship, Egenis – The Center for the Study of Life Sciences, University of Exeter (2018)

Presented papers at conferences in the UK, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Norway, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania

Articles published in analytic and continental philosophy

Book
Donner plus qu'on n'a. Éléments pour une théorie de l'action chez Bergson, Zeta Books, Bucharest, 2019

THE HISTORICAL PROMISES OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Abstract

This paper proposes some theoretical instruments for understanding the "historical promises" made by some modern philosophers of history. In our sense of the term, these "historical promises" refer to a desired future state of humanity/society, but insofar as it is related to a particular description of past historical development. The paper puts forth a hypothesis about how we should understand the notion of historical necessity involved in these promises and analyzes the three main discursive strategies that make up a promise. It then goes on to depict five successive waves of modern philosophical promises based on the previously identified categories.

Keywords: historical promise, necessity, irrevocable, heterogeneity of history, diagnosis

1. Introduction

This paper proposes some theoretical instruments for understanding the "historical promises" made by some modern philosophers of history. In the sense given to the term here, these "historical promises" refer to a (desired) future state of humanity/society, but insofar as this future state is related to a particular description of past historical development. The paper puts forth a hypothesis about how we should understand the notion of historical necessity involved in these promises (Section 2) and analyzes the three main discursive strategies that make up a promise (Section 3). It then goes on (Section 4) to depict five successive waves of modern philosophical promises based on the previously identified categories.

2. The Notion of Historical Necessity

The ideas in this article are, in large part, motivated by my unease with the fact that contemporary philosophers often denounce the absolute

necessity that modern philosophers of history allegedly bestowed upon the course of history; and, as a consequence of this, they often deride modern philosophers of history for having been completely wrong – or nearly so – in their predictions about where this necessary course of history was to lead humanity. This widespread condescending attitude of today's philosophers towards modern philosophies of history is based on two assumptions that might be worth questioning.

1) First, it is far from certain that "absolute necessity" is the type of historical necessity that modern philosophers see as being at work in history. If, by this absolute necessity, we understand that history follows a completely predetermined path, with each historical moment playing its predetermined role in leading to a particular outcome, then many modern philosophers of history may not be said to have fully embraced such a notion. Indeed, the image of history depicted by these authors often involves detours, false routes, dead ends, periods of crisis where the outcome hangs in the balance and so on. Therefore, the idea that the historical process, once it is "wound" like a clock, will inexorably follow its predetermined route is not an exact match for what many modern philosophers had in mind. In other words , "clock-like necessity" is not the type of necessity these authors bestowed upon history.

2) Second, it is not at all certain that modern philosophies of history were first and foremost meant to have theoretical – rather than practical – objectives. When, today, we deride past philosophies of history for having inaccurately predicted the direction humanity would take, we presuppose that these philosophies were assuming a neutral and even external position with respect to humanity/society, a disinterested position that was meant to facilitate the selection of the relevant facts for theoretically determining the future course of humanity. By doing this, we lose sight of the fact that for many of the authors we will discuss here, the main objective was that of *influencing* the course of humanity, rather than merely theoretically surmising what this future course would be. To take just one example, think of Auguste Comte, when he demands that the political authorities grant "positive philosophy" a tribune from which they could disseminate their message towards the general public, just like the theological spirit had its churches and the metaphysical one had its schools and universities (Comte 1844, 95-96). Comte was therefore far from merely intending to "predict" the future course of history. As I will emphasize below, there is an important element of mobilization in the historical promises made by modern philosophers and we need to admit that it is incompatible with

"clock-like necessity": indeed, why would philosophers try to influence the course of humanity through this mobilization element of their work if they assumed that this course was, in fact, unalterable?[1] Unless we are ready to admit to gross logical inconsistencies in these authors' works, we should try to see whether a notion of historical necessity different from "clock-like necessity" is present in these philosophies.

A candidate notion of historical necessity has been recently proposed in an extremely insightful article by Yemima Ben-Menahem (2009). Let me note from the very beginning that Ben-Menahem argues for a particular way of interpreting what the notion of "historical necessity" might mean in general, but it is absolutely not her goal to argue that this was the meaning modern philosophers of history had in mind[2]. She argues that historical necessity should be seen as a predicate of an event on the basis of this event's sensitivity to initial conditions and intervening factors. If a particular event occurred[3] even if many of the initial conditions of (or factors intervening in) the focal system were to be altered, we would say that the event has a high degree of necessity. On the contrary, if the event did not occur because even small changes to the initial conditions (or intervening factors) had been made, then it would count as contingent. Stability or instability of an outcome thus become the means for understanding the necessary/contingent notions, and this is why I will use the term "necessity-as-stability" for denoting Ben-Menahem's notion.

As Ben-Menahem stresses, necessity-as-stability allows us to call a historical event necessary not if it takes place "under all circumstances" – as the logical notion of necessity would demand –, but if this event "is *relatively* insensitive to small changes in the circumstances under which it takes place" (2009, 123). Because of this trait, necessity-as-stability seems prima facie much more compatible than clock-like necessity with the type of historical necessity advocated by modern philosophers of history. Indeed, the detours of history, the false routes, the dead-ends and critical moments that modern philosophers identified in history may be interpreted as disturbances of the initial conditions or intervening factors in the processes going on in the target system; but if, despite these disturbances, a similar outcome ensues, then necessity – in the sense of stability – may be granted to history. Thus, the first difficulty of the clock-like interpretation of necessity in modern philosophies of histories discussed above is neutralized if we assume the necessity-as-stability interpretation.

How about the second difficulty? Does the mobilization side of modern philosophies clash with the necessity-as-stability interpretation

of historical necessity just as it did with clock-like necessity? At first glance this does not seem to be the case. Note that here necessity is no longer an absolute term, but merely one end of a continuum, the end that exhibits a *relatively* low sensitivity to disturbances in initial conditions or intervening factors. This means that, for any historical event, there *are* disturbances that will prevent the desired event from happening. If we were to cast this interpretation of necessity over the work of a given modern philosopher of history, we would have to conclude that the future state of humanity promised by that philosopher is not guaranteed to happen in advance, that the event in question still has to be brought about: for example, by making sure that no significant disturbances are allowed to disrupt the existing circumstances or, on the contrary, by triggering such disruptions in order to increase the probability that the desired event will take place. Philosophers trying to mobilize their audience into preventing or affecting such disruptions thus becomes a logical option. Therefore, the relativization of historical necessity operated by the necessity-as-stability interpretation seems compatible with the mobilization aspect.

In this paper, I propose the hypothesis that a third notion of historical necessity – different from both clock-like necessity and necessity-as-stability – should be used in order to interpret the promises made by modern philosophers of science. This notion of historical necessity may be seen as occupying a sort of intermediary position between the two. Whereas clock-like necessity advocates an absolute necessity of history, necessity-as-stability relativizes the notion of necessity to the point where it actually loses any connotation of absolute: a "necessary" event, in this sense, is nothing but an event that has a high probability of occurring, depending on the magnitude and nature of alterations made to its initial conditions or to other intervening factors. According to the necessity-as-stability interpretation, all historical events – and, consequently, history as a whole – are, in fact, contingent ones, and all "absoluteness" is thus evacuated from history. But disposing of any trace of absolute in history is certainly not fully compatible with the intentions of many modern philosophers. If they attempted to mobilize their audience into bringing about or preventing certain events, they did not do so merely because those events or those desired historical eras were, for them, more probable or "preferable" to others, but because they considered that such events or eras where contributing to the fulfillment of human history. This is the main reason why, in my view, the necessity-as-stability notion does not do justice to the promises made by modern philosophers.

A second reason would be the restricted scope of the necessity-as-stability notion. As the presentation given above shows, this notion refers to the sensitivity to changes in initial conditions of particular evens (or events similar to them). It thus refers to *individual* events in history and it seems difficult to apply it to the course of history itself. Whether the course of history is sensitive or not to changes in initial conditions and intervening factors is a question that quickly tends to lapse into irrelevance: given that, in this interpretation, any event is probable – but not absolutely certain – any series of such events will quickly tend to become more and more sensitive to changes, so that using this sensitivity for distinguishing between various series of events becomes less and less interesting. More importantly, applying this notion not to particular events, but to the course of history would become akin to charting probability distributions of series of events: this is indeed very far from what modern philosophers of history were pretending to do.

The third notion of necessity that, I propose, might do justice to the work of many modern philosophers of history is what I call necessity-as-irrevocability. According to this notion, necessity refers to that which is irrevocably gained in history, those historical gains that may be neglected, ignored, even forgotten for some time, but which *cannot be essentially lost.* A necessary "gain" or "advance" is one that cannot be essentially effaced once it has been made, one to which human history will eventually get back – irrespective of how many detours this getting back to might take – and which will then be used as a basis for new historical gains. There is a crucial difference between this notion and those of clock-like necessity and necessity-as-stability. These two notions were essentially centered upon a future event: they are reached by choosing a focal point in history and by attempting to determine whether a *subsequent* event would be absolutely determined in advance (clock-like necessity) or whether its occurrence is relatively insensitive to changes in initial conditions (necessity-as-stability). By contrast, necessity-as-irrevocability is centered upon the future fate of a past event: for a philosopher engaged in such an enterprise, the main point is that of determining which past events are irrevocable and will thus necessarily serve – sooner or later – as the basis for the construction of the future.

The image of history that results from this view of necessity blends discontinuity with absoluteness. Indeed, if not all past events are irrevocable – if, in other words, the entire course of history is not predetermined –, then only a fraction of these events will be relevant for

the future of humanity/history, while the others will qualify as detours, setbacks, false routes or simply neutral phases. The work of the philosopher of history will thus consist in selecting the relevant – i.e. the irrevocable – historical gains. But discarding the idea of a continuous predetermined course of history does not evacuate the absolute from it. Irrevocability means that, once a historical gain is made, it cannot be essentially lost: it is, in this sense, an absolute. Precisely how such gains are made – what causal pathways lead to these events and the degree of inevitability of their result – is less important and may vary from author to author (with some insisting more on this aspect than others). But the crucial fact is that, once they have been made (i.e. by whatever more or less contingent pathways they may have been reached), these gains (or, as we will see, these losses) will remain irrevocable.

In this paper I will not attempt to make a full-fledged defense of the notion of necessity-as-irrevocability. Instead, I will use this notion in order to show how it may help us make sense of the historical promises made by modern continental philosophers. I will therefore not attempt to show that, when using the notion of "historical necessity," each of these authors had in mind something like "necessity-as-irrevocability." Instead, I will argue that this notion is supple enough to allow us to understand various types of historical promises that span from the Enlightenment to the second half of the 20th century. The next section will present the coordinates used for the analysis of these multiple types of promise.

3. The Main Elements of Historical Promises

The promises made by modern continental philosophers of history will be analyzed here along three main axes, which constitute the discursive strategies that make up a promise, namely: explanation, diagnosis and mobilization.

3.1. Explanation

The first of these discursive strategies – explanation – consists in the laying down of a logic of history or a description of historical development and of its connection with a promised future state of humanity/society. It is important to emphasize here that the explanation is not limited to past historical events or eras, but that it extends into the future (at least)

up until a desired state of humanity/history. Explanation is therefore not merely retrospective, but also prospective, using past historical factors and trends in order to predict the future course of history. All this is, of course, not significantly different from what traditional exegesis has to say about modern philosophy of history.

However – and this is what sets apart the present approach from traditional exegesis – my analysis will concentrate on two characteristics of explanation, and it will do so because these characteristics significantly affect the tonality and the requirements of the promise.

i) The first of these characteristics is *the degree of heterogeneity of historical becoming* that is identified by a given explanation. In other words, this characteristic refers to whether and to what extent the historical eras put forth in the explanation are viewed as qualitatively different. This latter formulation – "to what extent" eras are qualitatively different – might seem objectionable because it seems to make a futile attempt at quantifying qualitative difference. However, as I will argue in more detail below, the degree of heterogeneity between two eras is not given by the qualities themselves that are attached to these eras, but by the type of movement that is required in order to pass from one to the other: two such eras might simply be qualitatively different – in which case there will just be a transition phase between them –, but they might also be seen as moving in opposite directions, at least with respect to certain key aspects, or, finally, they might be seen as being essentially disconnected, so that no historical passage from one to the next is possible. Though in all these cases the two eras are qualitatively different, there is a growing heterogeneity between them that is undergirded by the degree of radicalism of the movement required for effecting the transition between them.

ii) The second characteristic of explanation that is crucial for the present analysis is *the degree of necessity granted to historical becoming*. Again, one might object that necessity is an all or nothing quality: a historical event is either necessary or not, it may not be "more" or "less" necessary than another. But I have already noted above that, in sharp distinction with clock-like necessity, Ben-Menahem's notion of necessity-as-stability does come in degrees. The notion of necessity-as-irrevocability that I propose here also admits degrees, but in a different manner. A historical gain – or loss – is irrevocable in an absolute sense: it may not be "more" or "less" irrevocable. But, depending on one's explanation, necessity-as-irrevocability may be bestowed upon larger or smaller fractions of history: more or less of history might thus be deemed necessary

(i.e. irrevocable), and this is how two explanations may vary in the degree of necessity granted to historical becoming even if they keep an absolute sense for the term "necessity." Once again, necessity-as-irrevocability occupies a sort of intermediary position between clock-like necessity and necessity-as-stability.

Let me add here that the distinction I propose in this study may help make sense of the similarity and dissimilarity between Enlightenment promises and promises of the 19th century. Classical or contemporary authors working on eschatological elements in modern philosophy seem to me to have difficulties articulating the promises of the 18th with those of the 19th century, insofar as they claim both that authors of the Enlightenment see their era as the advent of the empire of reason *and* that eschatological thinking returns in full force at the beginning of the 19th century (and, at least in part, as a reaction to Enlightenment thought). But this obvious tension (see, e.g., Taubes 2009, Wolfe 2018) may not be ironed out simply by an overhasty identification of the two, i.e. by acting as if no difference between Enlightenment and 19th century promises existed (this ironing out seems to me to have been classically operated by Löwith 1949). As we will see below, by disentangling the issue of historical necessity from that of the homogeneity/heterogeneity of historical becoming, we may come to better articulate the relationship – that is, the similarities and the dissimilarities – between the two kinds of promise.

3.2. Diagnosis

The second of the discursive strategies that make up a promise consists in a diagnosis of the present state of society/humanity, i.e. in placing the present on the trajectory of historical development indicated by the explanation. At first sight, one might see diagnosis as subordinated to – and indeed as a part of – explanation, because the present state is actually part of the whole trajectory that unites the past with the promised future state of humanity/society. But, far from being a mere secondary element, diagnosis plays three crucial roles within philosophical promises.

i) First of all, it serves as *corroboration for the historical explanation* provided by the philosopher in question. Whether or not an explanation is good is actually at least partly determined by how well it allows one to account for the present situation and by how many elements of the present it may accommodate. This marks a difference with respect to religious prophecies. In the latter there are always signs that indicate

when the prophesized event is about to take place. But the plausibility of the prophecy is not contingent upon these signs, the appearance of these signs does not convince one of its truth, but merely indicates that the time for the announced events has come. Of course, this is because the truth of the prophecy is never in question for the believer, whereas the philosophical promise must always convince its reader of its truth, and one of the main ways to do this is by providing an overarching view that helps the reader make sense of the present situation.

ii) Second, diagnosis may serve as the basis for establishing a *specific, irreducible role for the philosopher*. In certain types of philosophical promises, based on their preferred explanations, philosophers may disentangle progressive from regressive elements that intermingle in the present situation. The philosopher would thus play the role of a symptomatologist of the present. But, as we will see below, this is not the only irreducible role that diagnosis helps assign to philosophers. This is the characteristic of diagnosis that my analysis below will pay particular attention to.

iii) Finally, diagnosis also involves a *relational and rhetorical element*. The philosopher and the writer are united by their sharing of the same present described by the diagnosis, the readers recognize themselves in the description of the present provided by the philosopher. This creates a sense of community in motion, the sense of a common direction, which is an essential basis for the third discursive strategy of philosophical promises, namely mobilization.

3.3. Mobilization

The element of mobilization that is contained in philosophical promises consists, as the name explicitly points out, in the urging of the reader to engage in whatever activities are required for promoting the reaching of the desired future state of humanity/society. There are a number of potential ways in which mobilization may be carried out. The first one consists in actually addressing the readers in order to spur them in the desired direction. Probably the most famous instance of this is provided by the very last words of *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels ("Workingmen of all countries, unite!").

But directly addressing the reader is a rarer form of mobilization, and the most frequently encountered ones are of the indirect kind. A very popular one consists in providing maximally-compelling descriptions

of the desired future state of humanity/society or, conversely, in offering extremely unfavorable descriptions of the state that needs to be surpassed. An alternative means of mobilization – which often works in conjunction with the previous one – consists in very favorable depictions of the historical agents working towards the desired future state or, conversely, in very unflattering descriptions of the agents opposing the former. Because of space constraints, in my discussion in the rest of this paper I will not insist on the mobilization element of promises. Nonetheless, it was important to highlight it here in order to give weight to my claim that there is an important practical side to modern philosophies of history.

4. Successive Waves of Philosophical Promise

In what follows, I will provide a brief presentation of five successive waves of promises made by continental philosophers, showing how the categories indicated above may help distinguish between different kinds of promise and may help us better understand each of these kinds. Before moving further, let us note that going through roughly two centuries of philosophical promises in the space of a single article forces this presentation to leave out a great many details and to assume a somewhat didactical tone.

4.1. The Enlightenment promise

Any discussion of the historical promises belonging to the Enlightenment should probably begin with the early work of Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, the author that is widely accepted as marking the birth of the secular idea of universal history and a passionate defender of the indefinite progress that humanity is bound to experience. However, for lack of space, we will insist here on what is probably the best example of Enlightenment promise, which can be found in the work of Turgot's younger friend, Condorcet, and especially in his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*. The way in which Condorcet presents the aim of his *Sketch* is already very instructive:

> Such observations upon what man has been and what he is today, will instruct us about the means we should employ to make certain and rapid the further progress that his nature allows him still to hope for.

> Such is the aim of the work that I have undertaken, and its result will be to show by appeal to reason and fact that nature has set no term to the perfection of human faculties; that the perfectibility of man is truly indefinite (Condorcet 2012, 2).

Beside the indefinite perfectibility of man – which he explicitly acknowledges as being Turgot's "doctrine" (Condorcet 2012, 102) –, what is crucial for us here is the explicitly *practical* orientation of his entire enterprise. Note that his aim is not that of presenting an implacable course of history from a theoretical point of view, but that of studying the past and present progresses of man with the specific aim of discovering the means for establishing and accelerating (*accélerer* is the French term used by Condorcet) the further progress of humanity. With Condorcet, the explicitly practical nature and aim of philosophical promises becomes fully apparent; and "philosophy" itself, in the sense that Condorcet assigns to this term, is a practical endeavor meant to act upon humanity as a whole, which, according to Condorcet (2012, 125), always and necessarily means upon all human beings: "For it is there that one finds the true subject matter of philosophy, for all intermediate consequences may be ignored except insofar as they eventually influence the greater mass of the human race." There is no clearer manner of expressing the idea that philosophy of history is not a theoretical enterprise that aims to uncover the predetermined patterns of history;[4] rather, it is a manner of finding practical ways of "making certain" that future progresses will be made and of facilitating or accelerating their advent.

This does not mean that the future progresses of humanity are only "possible" ones. On the contrary, for Condorcet it is absolutely certain that humanity will progress indefinitely, but the transition phases between "progresses" – between historical gains, in my terms – are not predetermined, i.e. they may take various routes and various amounts of time. This means that the transition from a historical "gain" to the next one is not automatically made once we make the first one, we still need to effect that transition ourselves, it is our doing and not the doing of some pre-determined implacable historical fate. This is beautifully illustrated by a passage where Condorcet (2012, 15-16) explains the fact that certain peoples have not followed the path of progress by suggesting that this historical immobility has been chosen by these peoples in part as a reaction to the corruption, avidity and general unhappiness they perceived in more civilized peoples they came in contact with: this also

suggests that once the civilized peoples will have progressed enough to shed these unappealing moral vices, the peoples frozen in time will also have an incentive to take the route of progress.

Condorcet's view of history is thus one that regards necessity as irrevocability: any gain, once made, is irrevocable. As Condorcet says: "This progress will doubtless vary in speed, but it will never be reversed" (2012, 2). Many other instances of irrevocability are to be found in the *Sketch* (see, e.g., pp. 96-97, 147), but it is worth emphasizing that Condorcet also provides practical considerations for this irrevocability:

> the principles of philosophy, the slogans of liberty, the recognition of the true rights of man and his real interests, have spread through far too great a number of nations, and now direct in each of them the opinions of far too great a number of enlightened men, for us to fear that they will ever be allowed to relapse into oblivion (2012, 122).

The irrevocability of progress – here, of the progresses made in modern times – is not a merely metaphysical assumption for Condorcet, but it is based on the actual acceptance that they generate in the "great mass of the human race," as well as on other practical considerations that may contribute to their further spreading among other peoples. As Manuel (1965, 63) rightly shows, the center of gravity of an act of progress is, for Condorcet, located less in the moment of a particular discovery by a great man[5], and more on the moment and circumstances of the acceptance of that discovery by the general public. Similarly, the inevitability of modern progress for Condorcet is related less to the discoveries made by modern science and more by the inextricable relation established in modern times between science and public utility (see Manuel, 1965, 76-77). The same emphasis put on the factors and circumstances that help keep and spread the already made advances becomes obvious in the fact that the invention of writing and of printing are heavily praised by Condorcet (2012, 4-6 and 70-73) and are seen as the most important vectors of human progress. Thus, for Condorcet, necessity is granted to the whole of history, in the sense that all of the known history that he depicts in the *Sketch* constitutes a series of advances or gains that, once made, will have become irrevocable (and will sooner or later serve as a basis for further advances).

All these points underline to what extent the practical side of irrevocability was important for Condorcet. But this also clearly indicates that for Condorcet history remains a fundamentally homogeneous process:

the same type of factors – education and freedom, chiefly among them – constitute the "engine" of historical progress and they remain unchangeable throughout history. Internal differentiations between various periods of history are not qualitative differences between eras, but merely the effects of the various manners in which these two main factors are blocked or kept in the service of a small minority (clerics, tyrants and the like) in different periods. As was customary for other Enlightenment thinkers (see Cassirer 1951, 219-221), human nature plays here the central role, and history is only the successive unfurling of the potentialities of human nature.

This homogeneous view of history – common, for example, to Turgot, Condorcet or Kant – also explains why the diagnosis of the Enlightenment promise does not set up a specific role for the philosopher. The philosopher is indeed the promoter of progress in all its forms – be it scientific, cultural, moral or political –, but is, in this respect, no different from any cultivated person of the time. With respect to the present historical situation, the philosopher may point out that progress is accelerating – and Condorcet's diagnosis is on this point concurrent with Turgot's –, but as long as history is seen as one monotonous progress held in check for longer or shorter spells by opposing factors like tyranny or ignorance, a philosopher may only promote the factors that push humanity forward, without having a specific, irreducible role, a role that could not be fulfilled by other cultivated person of the time. That is to say, the historical explanation provided by Enlightenment authors is too empirical to support an interpretation of the present that would render philosophical expertise indispensable.

To sum up, the characteristics of the Enlightenment promise are the following: necessity (in the sense of irrevocability) is bestowed upon the whole of history; history is essentially seen as homogeneous; and the diagnosis does not allow for a specific, irreducible role for the philosopher.[6]

4.2. The stadial promise

For Enlightenment thinkers, history was essentially linear and cumulative. This makes for a monotonous view of history, one in which the little drama that exists is not inherent to historical development itself. Indeed, for these thinkers, the past as such opposes little resistance to the advancing of history: as noted above with respect to Condorcet, it is not the past itself that opposes historical progress, but the interest of various castes or individuals (the monopoly of knowledge in the case of clerics or the monopoly of power in tyranny). The one author who did

attempt to theorize such a resistance of the past, Turgot, still conceived it as the realization of a general tendency of the human being to prefer the comfort of routine, of repetition, of established habits to the effort required by innovation and experimentation. The factors resisting progress are therefore not historical ones (though they may be organized in particular institutions), but they are merely instantiations of general tendencies or inclinations of human beings (e.g. greed, laziness etc.). While historical development is the progressive realization of the predispositions inscribed in human nature, resistance to this development is, in a similar manner, the realization of general human inclinations. Thus, for the Enlightenment thinkers history seemed to lack positivity and depth.

This is no longer the case with what I will call "the stadial promise," a type of promise I will exemplify with the work of Auguste Comte. His "law of the three stages of intelligence" divides the development of human mind into three historical periods, the theological (which mainly consisted in postulating subjectivities as causes behind the phenomena encountered), the metaphysical (which consisted in seeing phenomena as the manifestation of metaphysical essences laying behind them) and, finally, the positive one (which consisted in relying only on objective facts and in attempting to identify the regularities – i.e. the "laws" – that they may be subsumed under). There is an obvious qualitative difference between the three stages, and this is underlined by the fact that to each of these essential stages of intelligence corresponds a form of social activity, rendering the theological state military, the metaphysical one feudal, and the positive one industrial. There is no longer a linear progression – marked by occasional setbacks, detours, stases –, but there are differences between successive stages that require complete reorganizations and that may thus not be reducible to mere differences in degree.

Historical becoming thus becomes heterogeneous. But this also means that the progression between these states or stages no longer conforms to a straightforward cumulative pattern. Each of the first two of Comte's states or stages constitutes a progress, only to later become a hindrance to progress.[7] Each historical moment thus acquires a hitherto unknown depth: it becomes the place of confrontation between factors that are not general or universal, but that are themselves historical. To put it otherwise, each moment becomes a stage – in the theatrical sense – on which a conflict takes place, a conflict between the progressive forces of the present and the forces of the past which oppose progress, but which have, at one point, themselves served as the basis on which today's progressive forces have appeared.

Navigating through these murky, conflictual waters of historical moments or periods becomes the chief task of (positive) philosophy. When it comes to providing an interpretation of the past, both the theological and the metaphysical spirit tend to overemphasize the period when they reined, while the preceding and following periods are seen simply as times of dark confusion and inexplicable disorder (see Comte 1841, 61). On the contrary, the positivist interpretation of history shows the necessity of each period insofar as it is, as the notion of irrevocability above implies, based on other preceding periods and prepares the arrival of a later period. Positive philosophy is, in Comte's eyes, the only one capable of doing justice to the whole of history, i.e. of showing the necessity of the whole of history:

> The positive spirit, thanks to its eminently relative nature, is the only one that can appropriately represent all the great historical eras as determinate phases of the same fundamental evolution, in which each era derives from the preceding one and prepares the next according to invariable laws (Comte 1844, 61).

It is important to emphasize here that the "relative" nature of the positive spirit refers to the fact that, unlike the theological or the metaphysical spirits, it does not postulate beings or essences behind the studied phenomena, but merely analyses the facts and tries to find the regularities that link them together. The positivist interpretation does justice to history precisely insofar as it does not postulate some driving force behind historical events, but merely tries to retrospectively deduce the "invariable laws" linking them *after* they will have taken place. Comte makes sure to emphasize this:

> We can be certain today that the doctrine that will have suitably explained the whole of the past will inevitably obtain, thanks to this single test, the mental presidency of the future (Comte 1844, 62).

It is obvious from this crucial passage that Comte saw his whole enterprise as first and foremost a practical one: the interpretation of history is, of course, a theoretical endeavor, but it is subordinate insofar as it provides us with the means to move forward, it grants one the "mental presidency" for the construction of the future. Comte's work is therefore not directed at finding out the implacable clock-like march of a history

predetermined by some metaphysical agency hidden behind the actual historical phenomena; rather, it is geared towards amassing the means for constructing – in the most practical sense – the future of humanity. Indeed, this passage teaches us that, for Comte, only the best interpretation of past gains may help us choose new goals, new gains to pursue.

When it comes to diagnosis, the stadial promise radically differs from the Enlightenment promise. Whereas, in keeping with the homogeneous character assigned to history, the Enlightenment thinkers saw the present period just as an accelerated version of past periods, in the stadial promise the present situation is both one of transition and one of crisis. This is compatible with the qualitative and conflictual view of history. For example, for Comte, the metaphysical stage is both a period of transition from the theological to the positive stage and a process of dissolution or erosion of theologism. Similarly, the present is interpreted both as a period in which the positive stage begins to bud, but its future blossoming is still delayed by the fierce resistance opposed by the remnants of the theological and metaphysical states. This also opens the door for a specific role that only the philosopher can fulfill: armed with the historical explanation he has forged (e.g. Comte's description of the three stages), the philosopher is the only one who can disentangle the positive and thus progressive elements of the present from the theological and metaphysical elements that resists them and that may often be hard to distinguish from the former. For Comte, the period of the "great crisis" that starts with the French Revolution is characterized by an intellectual, moral and political chaos determined by the fact that the abrupt end of the theological political organization only showed the incapacity of the metaphysical spirit to provide such an organization and thus prompted a return, a restoration of theological political rule (1844, 51). Luckily, positive philosophy was now in place and it could both provide a guide to follow and interpret away the obstacles in its path.[8] Moreover, the *Système de politique positive* will bring to the fore – beside the intellectual and the social organization one – the affective element, and the role of the philosophers – now called "the priests of humanity" and lead by the "High Priest," Comte himself – was that of making sure that the rhythm of progress was similar in all three domains, and that any lagging behind or too sudden advance on one of these fronts did not happen (see Comte 1853, 67). In both of these cases, the philosopher acts as a symptomatologist of the present: from the vantage point of his view of history, the philosopher can cure the ailments and confusions of the present by disentangling the progressive and the

regressive elements and can also act as an "auscultator" of the rhythm of the intellectual, activist and emotive progresses of the present.[9]

4.3. The bottleneck promise

The bottleneck promise brings with it a sensible increase in the heterogeneity of historical becoming. The qualitative difference between the stages or eras of the stadial promise now turns into outright *opposition*. For Marx and Engels – because they are the authors I will use to instantiate the bottleneck promise – the present era does not only resist the desired future one; rather, the two are now portrayed as pushing in opposite directions. The present situation is no longer one of chaos and confusion underneath which, however, a transition is taking place whether we sense it or not; on the contrary, now the present situation is straightforwardly presented as one of decay, and it is only by reaching the bottom of this decay that a new era can rise. Therefore, the passage from the present era to the desired future one is no longer a transition, but requires a complete reversal, a revolution. Here is how Marx and Engels phrase this:

> The modern labourer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the process of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law (Marx and Engels 1988, 221).

Instead of the desired domination-free society, the present society exhibits a type of domination that continually degrades the status of the dominated. The logical distance between the present and the desired era is actually growing, the transition between them is not facilitated – progress is not accelerating as in the Enlightenment promise, the resistance of theological and metaphysical states does not get progressively weaker, as in the stadial promise; on the contrary, the transition between them seems to become harder to envisage. But then how does the transition still remain possible?

The solution for this problem proposed by Marx and Engels consists in identifying an element meant to guarantee that this transition will take place. By increasing the heterogeneity between the present and the desired

era to the point where it becomes an opposition, Marx and Engels are forced to emphasize the clock-like necessity of the transition between the two opposing forces. And the element that renders, for them, this transition necessary is the need for survival of the proletarians. As their position gets articulated with more and more precision, this element of clock-like necessity is more and more pronounced. In *The Holy Family*, Marx claimed only that the proletarian, "through urgent, no longer disguisable, absolutely imperative *need* – that practical expression of *necessity* – is driven directly to revolt against inhumanity" (Marx and Engels 1956, 52): here, the transition seems to stem from a revolt against inhumanity. But this element soon becomes hardened by taking the form of the need for survival of proletarians, already in 1846, in *The German Ideology*: "things have now come to such a pass that the individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but, also, merely to safeguard their very existence" (Marx and Engels 1998, 96). This clock-like necessity of the transition between the present and the desired future era will get hardened in Marx's thought to the point where it will receive the inexorability of physical processes: "Capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation" (Marx 1990, 929).[10] To sum up, the bottleneck promise does introduce an instance of clock-like necessity in history, but it does not refer to the whole of history, but only to the transition between the present and the desired era.[11]

Nevertheless, we must highlight that Marx and Engels also keep an element of continuity (similar, in some respects, to Comte's) between the present and the desired era. What the present inhumanity of the living conditions of proletarians fosters is, for Marx and Engels, the class-consciousness of proletarians. But it is important to stress that this not only refers to their awareness of their own miserable situation, but also of their historical mission, namely that of de-alienating the whole of society. As Engels states in his 1888 preface to *The Comunist Manifesto* (and this is an idea he attributes to Marx): "a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class – the proletariat – cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class – the bourgeoisie – without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class struggles" (Marx and Engels 1988, 207). The interesting logical connection here is that revolution will only take place when its effects will be irrevocable ("once and for all emancipating society"). The clock-like

necessity that the bottleneck promise is forced to introduce in (a certain part of) history does not preclude necessity-as-irrevocability and the two notions support each other here.

I will not insist here too much on the diagnosis element in the work of Marx and Engels: it is very extensive, as they continually showed how the historical events they were contemporary with were seamlessly compatible with their theoretical framework. Also, the role they often assumed was that of helping their audience navigate the treacherous waters of the multitude of existing forms of socialisms (see the last part of *The Communist Manifesto* or the *Critique of the Gotha Program*). But I will also mention here in passing that there is a heroic role for the philosopher in the bottleneck promise. The point of philosophy, as Marx's 1945 *Theses on Feuerbach* state, is no longer that of interpreting the world, but of changing it. Moreover, while Feuerbach claimed that modern philosophy only realized theology, for the young Marx it was now high time to realize philosophy itself: "Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of philosophy" (1992, 257) The philosopher-hero thus changes the world and, through this last heroic act, puts an end to philosophy itself.[12]

4.4. The nihilistic promise

For the bottleneck promise, the qualitative difference between the present and the desired future was so great that it amounted to an opposition and the transition between these eras required nothing less than a reversal. The nihilistic promise goes one step further: in it, the qualitative difference between the present and the future eras becomes absolute. These two eras become incomparable, incommensurable – they no longer belong to the same ontological plane. To put it otherwise, no historical factor or factors could realize the transition from our era to the next anymore, there are no historical means, no means at our disposal for effecting the passage between these two eras.

A few remarks need to be made here to facilitate understanding. First, the nihilistic promise – like the bottleneck promise – sees the present as the pinnacle of decay, the lowest point in a history of degradation. However, unlike the bottleneck promise, it no longer has the confidence to identify a historically immanent mechanism that would operate a complete reversal of the situation, bringing it from the lowest point of

decay to heights unknown to man before. This degrading image of history is one of the factors that keep this type of philosophy from simply falling into a non-historical dualism that would radically separate this world from another world, with no potential passage between them.

But this degrading view of history does not mean that any historical irrevocability is rejected. It just means that it is understood in a negative sense: it is the irrevocability of a loss and not that of gains, and this is the main reason for calling this the "nihilistic" promise. What is irrevocable, for this type of philosophy, is the wrong turn taken at some point in history. Once such a wrong turn has been taken, it can no longer be righted by historical or merely human means. The best example of this type of promise is provided by the "second" Heidegger – and especially Heidegger of the 1940s – for whom this wrong turn is onto-theological thinking (or metaphysics), situated at the very beginning of Western philosophy, in Ancient Greece: for Heidegger, Western history is essentially the history of Western philosophy, and this history has not stopped descending the slope of the forgetting of Being that had been set for it at this initial moment of confusion.[13] But characterizing this initial moment is not easy, and it seems to come in two steps: first, some of the pre-Socratic thinkers were able to name the essential ambiguity that links Being to beings and that renders the former prone to being forgotten; but the more decisive moment comes with Plato and Aristotle, where this ambiguity itself is forgotten, and we thus forget the very fact that there is a "question of Being."[14] The situation of the 20th century – mainly consisting in treating all the world, including human beings, as a resource for an ever-accelerating process of production and thus bringing the objectification of world and humans at its peak (see Heidegger 1982, 241-242) – is traced by Heidegger to this forgetting of Being.

The originality of the nihilistic promise comes from the fact that, in it, the two characteristics of philosophical explanation – the degree of heterogeneity and the degree of necessity (as irrevocability) of historical becoming merge: the fact that there no longer are historical means for making the transition between two eras separated by an ontological gap is just another way of saying that the wrong turn taken by history is irrevocable or, in any case, it cannot be revoked by human, historical means. In Heidegger's terms: "the plan to overcome nihilism becomes superfluous, if by overcoming we mean that man independently subject that history to himself and yoke it to its pure willing" (1982, 225). If the transition between the present and the desired future era is to take place,

it will do so not by human or historical means, it will have to be operated by Being itself.

But then what role could there be left for the philosopher? In a theoretical context in which the diagnosis only encounters a present of decay that lacks the means for its own overturning, the only role left for the philosopher is that of guarding the possibility of a different future as possibility. For Heidegger, this comes down to contemplating the absence of Being (in the nihilistic present) as a mode of Being itself: Being is recognized as such in its very absence. The main role of the philosopher is thus that of a commemorator: not someone that can elicit change by themselves, but someone that could keep open the possibility of a new regime of Being by meditating at the fact that even its absence is a regime of Being.

Let me briefly note that, despite their enormous theoretical and political differences, both Heidegger and Walter Benjamin might be seen as adhering to the nihilistic type of promise. Without going into details, I will just note that Benjamin's "Theologico-political fragment" establishes an absolute, an ontological gap between the historical and the messianic, and this separation itself is irrevocable[15] unless some extra-historical intervention were to take place; the role of the philosopher-commemorator here becomes that of studying, with respect to various historical situations, the missed possibilities of what might have been. The philosophers-commemorators thus keep open a possibility that they themselves could never bring about.

4.5. The hopeful promise

The last wave of philosophical promise that I will discuss here will be exemplified Herbert Marcuse's 1969 *Essay on liberation*. A few significant novelties characterize this type of promise. First, Marcuse seems to revert to pre-marxist views with respect to the heterogeneity of history. There is, for him, a qualitative difference between the present society and the desired future one ("a socialist society qualitatively different from existing societies", one that would amount to a "radical transvaluation of values" – Marcuse 1969, ix, 6), but the latter is already prefigured, at least in part, in the former. Thus, Marcuse emphasizes the "new sensibility of the young," one that could open the path for the societal change, a sensibility that Marcuse does not attempt to explain historically, but that, he urges, needs to be encouraged. Second, also like in the stadial promise, the transition

towards the desired future state is seen as a progressive rejection of the present society by its members: it is therefore a change from within, one that will become progressively more rapid as more and more elements of the present society get eroded.

As far as historical necessity is concerned, there is little doubt that the benefits brought about by Marcuse's desired socialist society would be irrevocable[16]. But, as in Marx's bottleneck promise, irrevocability seems to be granted not to the whole of history, but only to the gains brought about by one particular period in history, that of the advent of the desired socialist society. But this already leads us to the great difference of the hopeful promise with respect to the stadial and bottleneck promises, as well as with respect to all the other promises discussed here: the hopeful promise brings with it an etiolating of the historical content of promises. The hopeful promise approaches the issue from the opposite angle to the one adopted by the other promises: it attempts to determine what the preconditions for the promised society are in theory[17] and only then to find out whether and to what extent these conditions are found in the present society. Note the striking difference with respect to Marx: it is no longer a matter of providing a mechanism of clock-like necessity that would implacably force the transition between the present and the desired societies. Rather, it is about *what would be needed* for the future society to be realized. As Marcuse (1969, 71) states at one point: "the revolution would be liberating only if it were carried by the non-repressive forces stirring in the existing society. The proposition is no more – and no less – than a hope." This is why I call this the "hopeful promise": it is not a promise about what will happen, but about what is hoped to happen. But, most importantly, in the hopeful promise – and this is its major novelty with respect to all the others – the past is no longer the engine of history, the past is no longer the force that pushes history in one direction or another. In the hopeful promise, it is not the past that leads to a particular future; it is the future that "attracts" us towards it. Indeed, it is no accident that when he identifies preconditions of the promised society in the present, Marcuse often presents them not as factors leading towards the future, but as "ingressions of the future into the present" (Marcuse 1969, 89; see also 21-22).

But if the description of the past no longer plays a role in introducing the desired future and if everything gets concentrated into the relationship between the present and the future society, what I called explanation gets absorbed into diagnosis to the point that they become practically

indistinguishable. With the hopeful promise, we reach a point where the promise loses its historical footing and, as a consequence, it becomes problematic to continue to call it a "historical promise." As for the role granted to philosophy, without a historical explanation that attempts to embrace the past, present and future into a single encompassing theoretical structure, the philosopher becomes a militant.

5. Conclusions

There are a number of tentative conclusions we can draw from our discussion above. First, as I tried to show, the degree of heterogeneity granted to historical becoming may serve as the main criterion for a typology of the promises made by modern philosophy. Second, the promises that see history as homogeneous as well as the promises for which the explanation of the past loses its centrality do not seem to grant a specific, irreducible role for the philosopher. The corollary to this is that the explanations that see history as essentially non-homogeneous and that gain momentum in the 19th century create a significant cultural niche for philosophy.

Third, historical promises do not hinge on the idea of an implacable course of history, nor on postulating a "final stage" for the history of humanity. Rather, they are dependent on the idea that there are irrevocable gains (or losses) in history. This entails that, even though ideas about an inexorable course of history or about a "final goal" of history may have lost credibility in the philosophy of the late 19th century, this loss of credibility does not necessarily render historical promises obsolete. The twilight of philosophical promises would thus have to be related to the abandoning of the idea that there are irrevocable gains in history. But determining whether this has indeed occurred in contemporary continental philosophy is something that should be proven elsewhere.

NOTES

[1]   In a beautiful book about the "prophets" of Paris from 1750 to about 1850, Frank Manuel (1965, 299) notes at one point that these authors "were both determinists and activists." Statements of this sort need to be taken with a grain of salt unless one explains how these two stances are compatible with each other. This is one of the motivations behind my approach here.

[2]   Therefore, when I suggest that Ben-Menahem's notion of necessity is not fully compatible with that of modern continental philosophers of history, this in no way detracts from the merits of Ben-Menahem's notion.

[3]   Ben-Menahem rightly points out that this notion of necessity refers not to whether or not a particular event occurs if we change its initial conditions, but to whether or not a *similar* event occurs. I will ignore this complication here, given that it does not make a difference for the aims of my discussion.

[4]   When he comes to making predictions about the future progresses of humanity, Condorcet does not claim that they are certainly accurate (and that therefore his presentation of history captures its absolutely predetermined course). On the contrary, he only claims "some pretence to truth" (2012, 125) for his prediction ("quelque vraisemblance"), though as his presentation moves forward his confidence seems to grow a little, while still falling short of any absolute certainty, when he speaks, for example, of "a hope that is almost a certainty" (134), or, in his original words, "une espérance presque certaine."

[5]   This seemed to be the case for Turgot, as Manuel acknowledged. Another difference between Turgot and Condorcet is the fact that the former did believe that "final causes" guide humanity through history, whereas the latter did not – indeed this point had become an inside joke for the two friends in their private conversations (see, e.g., letters CVIII and CIX in Henry 1882, 149-150). For other slight differences between Turgot and Condorcet, see Boarini (2011).

[6]   Instead of Condorcet (or Turgot), we could have used some of Kant's work in order to illustrate the Enlightenment promise. I do not have the space to insist on this here, but I will just point out that Kant's endorsement of what I called here necessity-as-irrevocability is obvious in a number of key expressions. For example, in "On the common saying: this may be true in theory, but it does not hold in practice" (1793), Kant states that "this progress will occasionally be *interrupted* but never *broken off*" and he also speaks of making "the good, which, once it exists, preserves itself, dominant" (Kant 2006, 62, 65). Similarly, in "The contest of faculties" (1798), Kant states that, after a republican constitution will have been established, this will guarantee "a progression of the human race from then on toward the better that can not be completely reversed" (Kant 2006, 158).

7   For example, the theological stage was deemed by Comte indispensable for the upsurge of our intelligence as well as for our sociability, only for later to become, through its remnant opinions, mores and institutions, a vicious force opposing the spread of the positive philosophy.

8   Comte, for example, dismisses the various doctrines of utopian socialism on grounds that they constitute an attempt at a theological restoration (Comte, 1844, 66).

9   Another example of the philosopher-symptomatologist may be found in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *Philosophy of progress* (1853, 52-53), who argues that, in the present interregnum (i.e. the post-1789 period) between the old regime of the Absolute and the new regime of Progress, there is a great confusion brought about by the fact that we do not know whether our embracing of a particular idea stems from our adhesion to the Absolute or to Progress. The role of the philosopher is to dispel this confusion by disentangling progressive ideas from absolutist ones.

10   This is the side of Marx that many thinkers inspired by Marx tend to reject nowadays (see, e.g., Laclau 1990; Löwy, 2005).

11   Marx and Engels openly rejected the idea of an implacable predetermined course of the whole of history (see, e.g., Marx and Engels 1998, 58).

12   Recall Adorno's (1973, 3) well-known words: "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed."

13   "Being itself withdraws. The withdrawal happens. The abandonment by Being of the being as such takes place. When does it happen? Now? Only yesterday? Or a long time ago? How long has it been? Since when? Since the being came into the unconcealed as the being itself. Metaphysics has prevailed ever since this unconcealment occurred; for metaphysics is the history of the unconcealment of the being as such. Since that history came to be, there has historically been a withdrawal of Being itself; there has been an abandonment by Being of beings as such; there has been a history in which there is nothing to Being itself. Consequently, and from that time on, Being itself has remained unthought" (Heidegger 1982, 215).

14   "it happens not only that Being as such stays away, but that its default is thoughtlessly misplaced and suppressed by thinking. The more exclusively metaphysics gains control of the being as such and secures itself in and by the being as the truth 'of Being,' the more decisively has it already dispensed with Being as such." (Heidegger 1982, 219).

15   Even a reading of Benjamin that is more optimistic and less prone to giving a role to divine intervention in historical change – such as Michael Löwy's reading – has to admit that there is a sense of a "fall" in Benjamin that comes after "primitive classless society" (see Löwy 2005, 63).

16   See, for example, his ardent declarations at the end of the *Essay* (1969, 90)

17   On the issue of the preconditions of the promised society, see (Marcuse 1969, ix, 4-5, 10, 18, 53, 91).

Bibliography

ADORNO, T, *Negative Dialectics*, Seabury, New York, 1973

BEN-MENAHEM, Y, "Historical necessity and contingency", in A. Tucker (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2009

BOARINI, S, "Turgot, Condorcet. Les Lumières face au progrès", in *La découverte*, 43, 2011

CASSIRER, E, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1951

COMTE, A, *Discours sur l'esprit positif*, Carilian-Goeury et Dalmont Éditeurs, Paris, 1844

COMTE, A, *Système de politique positive ou Traité de sociologie, instituant la Religion de l'Humanité*, tome III, Carilian-Goeury et Dalmont Éditeurs, Paris, 1853

CONDORCET, N, *The Sketch*, in *Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012

HEIDEGGER, M, "Nihilism and the history of being", in *Nietzsche*, vol. IV: *Nihilism*, Harper & Row, New York, 1982

HENRY, C, *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et Turgot (1770-1779)*, Charavay Frères Éditeurs, Paris, 1883

KANT, I, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006

LACLAU, E, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times*, Verso, London and New York, 1990

LÖWY, M, *Fire Alarm. Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, Verso, London and New York, 2005

LÖWITH, K, *Meaning in History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1949

MANUEL, F, *The Prophets of Paris. Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Comte*, Harper & Row, New York, 1965

MARCUSE, H, *An Essay on Liberation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969

MARX, K, *Capital*, vol. I, Penguin Classics, London, 1990

MARX, K, *Early Writings*, Penguin Classics, London, 1992

MARX, K, and ENGELS, F, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", in MARX, K, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The Communist Manifesto*, Prometheus Books, New York, 1988

MARX, K, and ENGELS, F, *The German Ideology*, Prometheus Books, New York, 1998

MARX, K, and ENGELS, F, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956

PROUDHON, P-J, *La philosophie du progrès*, Alphonse Lebègue Imprimeur-Éditeur, Bruxelles, 1853

TAUBES, J, *Occidental Eschatology*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2009

WOLFE, J, "The Eschatological Turn in German Philosophy", in *Modern Theology*, 35(1), 2019.

LUCIANA JINGA

Born in1982, in Romania

Ph.D. in Contemporary History, Angers University, France –Al. I. Cuza University, Iași, Romania
Dissertation: *Femeile în cadrul Partidului Comunist Român/ The Women Inside the Romanian Communist Party, 1945-1989*

Researcher, Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Romanian Exile, Bucharest, Romania

Fellowships and grants:
Marie Curie IF project, University of Angers, France (2017-2019)

Participation to international conferences in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Czech Republic, UK, USA

Several publications on gender studies, childhood studies, recent European history

Monograph:
Gen și reprezentare în România Comunistă: 1944-1989 [Gender and representation in Communist Romania: 1944-1989], Polirom, Iași, 2015

THE (IM)POSSIBLE ALLIANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES:
THE IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AID AND POLITICS TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN IN ROMANIA (1990-2007)

Abstract

The paper explores to what extent the Transnational Humanitarian assistance for the Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s shaped the post-communist transformations of the social sector, using as case study the humanitarian aid for children and the government politics towards institutionalized children in Romania (1990-2007). By humanitarian aid I refer to the material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, as it evolved during the twentieth century and culminated with the emergence of a new, transnational humanitarianism, with permanent, professional actors. For this study the social sector includes the policies regarding health, education and sanitation. The paper discusses how the humanitarians understood to work (or not) with the Romanian partners, what was the response of the Romanian government and with what consequences. The text analyses the first and only official scientific tool meant to solve the trust issues of all the parties involved in the humanitarian aid to Romania after the fall of the communist regime (*Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners*).

Keywords: Humanitarian Aid, Romania, postsocialism, children, alliance

The fall of the communist regime gave the occasion for massive humanitarian actions towards Romania in what seemed to be a premiere after the end of WWII. In the Romanian case, in the first two weeks the humanitarian mission was a response to what was thought to be a military conflict. The teams sent to Bucharest were composed mostly by physicians.

But very soon, it evolved into emergency aid towards the institutionalized children. Horrifying images of dying children captured mass media attention all over the world. 'Ceaușescu's children' or 'Ceaușescu's orphans' triggered massive humanitarian aid towards Romania. After a short emergency phase, the humanitarian actors decided to stay in Romania for subsequent development projects meant to reform the entire childcare system. Very quickly, the international anti-communist discourse blaming Ceaușescu for the tragedy of the Romanian children evolved into severe criticism towards the entire Romanian society, based on Romania's unwillingness to reform its residential care system and the active resistance of the local population towards humanitarians.

Important stakeholders, such as the European Community; transnational NGOs; several European countries, decided to scientifically investigate the reasons behind the Romanian reluctance (*Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners,* 1993). During the research, fifteen Romanian academics stressed out what the notion of "alliance" meant to them when referring to humanitarian aid, namely a relation governed by respect, confidence, dignity, in a context where both partners are in need for help. They also suggested that synonyms such as *cooperation* or *co-participation* would better describe the relation between initiators and beneficiaries, as Romania developed along with the "Third World" countries during the 1970s and the 1980s. On the other hand, the Western NGOs insisted that Romanians are communist products, suffering from low self-esteem. Therefore, as beneficiaries, they could not refuse/react to the humanitarian aid even if they did not agree to it. The talks had no significative outcomes. Starting with 1994, important stakeholders, such as Doctors Without Borders, ended their missions in Romania; some (Handicap International) drastically reduced their budgets; while others (Doctors of the World, SERA) transferred their projects to Romanian partners/branches.

I argue that the impossible dialogue between the initiators of the humanitarian aid (European institutions, humanitarian organizations, formal and informal support networks) and the beneficiary (Romania) is the main responsible for the slow-moving transformation of the childcare system in post-communist Romania. In my paper I show how the Romanian case is an example on how humanitarianism requires us to believe that a set of extraordinary circumstances exist, requiring immediate attention and justifies what Nietzsche has called "an excess of history". This excess hides contingencies, contexts, and alternative explanations with the result

that they are forgotten as inconvenient extras thus staunching any debate over the validity of a claim or idea; in this case, the claim is the naturalness or taken-for-granted nature of humanitarianism.[1]

An overview of the existing literature is by no means a reflection of humanitarian actions worldwide.[2]

In the last 20 years a great deal of works on transnational humanitarian actions has been published.[3] Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe, is rarely present as recipient of humanitarian aid, with one important exception, Yugoslavia during the war. A breakthrough is an issue of *Eastern Journal of European Studies* (2014),[4] with its special section dedicated to humanitarian aid in Eastern Europe after the fall of the communist regimes. As for the post-socialist Romanian case, the humanitarian aid has been addressed through the angle of international adoptions.[5] Further on, since 2017, during a Marie Curie IF project, I investigated the extent to which "gender", as category of analysis, can be a useful tool in explaining the nature and the impact of humanitarian aid of Western organizations towards children in Europe, between 1980 and 2007, using as case study the relation France (initiator)-Romania (beneficiary).

In order to verify my hypothesis, I rely on Michel Foucault's genealogical approach to history. Namely, I show that humanitarianism is a historical construction and that it has, and always will, be subject to change.[6] This implies that there is room for resistance to humanitarianism in its current form. Foucault's notion of genealogy instructs us to look for this change in historical points of intersection that give rise to new historical trajectories. I believe that the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe enabled us to see the contingent and constructed nature of humanitarianism. Furthermore, I adopt a postcolonial theory, which has a critical approach to Western values and epistemology and examines the long-standing effects of colonization. While there no longer exist an overt process of holding land and directly ruling populations, there still remain "elements of political, economic and cultural control".[7] This on-going form of latter-day colonialism is referred to as neocolonialism. One practice that extended from the colonial to the neocolonial is the duty to care. In the colonial period, this is the belief that the colonizing power has an obligation to 'civilize' and 'improve' the colonized. In the postcolonial period, these become neocolonial practices under one or the other banners of development, democratizing, or rescuing (from war or disaster).[8] Postcolonial theory holds that part of the success of colonialism and neocolonialism is the insidious nature of its practices and discourse

over a broad sweep of time such that it has now become common sense and therefore largely indistinguishable from the non-colonial.[9]

In 1970 the Romanian communist government reorganized the entire child care system. The novelty was a rigorous medical examination of all children entering the state care system and subsequent segregation of children according to their intellectual capacities. When the communist regime fell in December 1989, 125,000 children were included in the care system.[10] During the first post-communist decade, the Romanian authorities failed to address the problem and kept in place both the legislation and the communist practices that sentenced all abandoned, disabled children to lives in institutional settings. Only after 1997 did Romania take important steps to reorganize the childcare system, prioritizing foster care over residential care.[11] The government, with the support of several NGOs, closed down many of the old, larger orphanages. The network of foster families proved to be a success, absorbing the majority of healthy institutionalized orphans. There was also progress with respect to the institutions hosting disabled children, which were gradually transformed into smaller, better-equipped facilities. Additionally, a national network of social workers was set up in order to prevent the risk of abandonment. This last measure proved to be less successful. A lack of progressive approaches to the welfare system and a long, painful transition to a market economy undermined efforts to reduce rates of abandonment.[12] The only alternative to long-time institutionalization remained adoption, both national and international. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the number of national adoptions remained constant, but relatively insignificant, and they were not a solution to rampant child abandonment.[13] Inter-country, or international/transnational adoption proved to be a better solution. After the Second World War, Romania agreed, for humanitarian reasons, to care for children coming from war zones. Decree 137/1956 reinforced the idea that Romania could receive children as well as send them abroad in special circumstances and only with the direct consent of Romania state's leader. After 1965 communist Romania used this provision in order to send thousands of children abroad for international adoption. The phenomenon exploded after the fall of the communist regime. The number of abandoned children that left Romania between 1990 and 2004 temporarily alleviated pressure on the childcare system. Ultimately, scandals surrounding the existence of an allegedly black market for adopted Romanian children as well as EU pressure forced Romania to issue a moratorium, in 2001, on international adoption. The procedure was finally outlawed in 2005.[14]

To analyze the nature of the humanitarian commitment towards Romania, this paper is structured in two parts. The first one discusses why and how the Romanian case, as beneficiary of the humanitarian aid, was constructed, the stakeholders involved in the humanitarian aid for children (local and European institutions, humanitarian organizations, formal and informal support networks, the different categories of children that benefited from it) and the targeted problems (prevention of violence and protection, targeting and distribution of relief, health and reproductive rights, nutrition and household food security, income generation and skill training, information and advocacy, HIV/AIDS). Finally, I shall discus how the humanitarians understood to work (or not) with the Romanian partners and what was the response of the Romanian government. I shall use as case study the first and only official scientific tool meant to solve the trust issues of all the parties involved in the humanitarian aid to Romania after the fall of the communist regime (*Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners*).

The paper draws on previous research,[15] as well as new documentation, in order to examine the humanitarian aid for children in Romania. Most of the documentation came from private archives of the four most important transnational NGOs that had missions in Romania: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), Médecins du monde (Doctors of the World), Handicap International and Care International-SERA. Retrieving information from these sources proved to be a test. First, in all four cases access is granted on formal request. Second, every organization had its own vision regarding the importance of collecting and preserving the follow up of its projects. Therefore, I had the methodological challenges of navigating across very well-preserved archives, but also recovering documents stored on 30-year-old floppy disks. I also conducted a campaign to record oral history, interviewing former humanitarian personnel working in childcare institutions, former Romanian personnel working for the transnational NGOs and beneficiaries. Many humanitarians published their *memoirs*. In this study, I use several similar publications which added a new methodological endeavor, namely the risk, of being 'captive' to our sources. In the history of humanitarianism, this perspective may produce a false sense of the importance and extent of humanitarian aid. NGOs and governments have always justified donations and investments by describing aid as transformational. To address this risk, this paper also uses extensively Romanian sources (archives, press).

The framework of intervention

Romanian Revolution

In December 1989, Romania experienced what is called the 'Romanian Revolution', a violent outbreak against the communist regime that killed over 1,000 people and seriously injured another 3,000. For ten days, 16-25 December, first the military, then unidentified shooters, targeted the civil population in the cities all over the country but especially in Timisoara and Bucharest, the capital. All the foreign journalists, already present in Bucharest, broadcasted live the violent events, insisting on what appeared to be a civil war and on the important number of casualties. It is in this context that the French Government decides very quickly, on 22nd of December, to send humanitarian medical help for the Romanian population. Médecins du Monde (MdM) and Médecins sans Frontières jumped to the occasion. The French official, chief of this mission in Romania, was the French minister for Humanitarian Aid, Bernard Kouchner. The charismatic humanitarian co-founded Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) in 1971, organization he left in 1979, only to establish Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World), a year later, in 1980.[16]

Horrifying images of dying children seized mass media attention all over the world. 'Ceaușescu's children' or 'Ceaușescu's orphans' triggered massive humanitarian aid to Romania.[17] At that time, nobody differentiated between the children living in ordinary orphanages and those confined in neuropsychiatric hospitals. The media coverage stated that all 120,000 abandoned Romanian children, undesired products of the communist pronatalist policy, were placed in orphanages and were fighting for their lives. The European Commission, NGOs, several European states, such as France, Germany and Switzerland, and ordinary individuals came to Romania to help abandoned children by working in different childcare institutions or seeking to adopt orphans in order to save their lives. About 1,200 international NGOs were active in Romania in 1990. Without any real coordination from the new Romanian authorities, although such an organization officially existed,[18] many of the Western humanitarians were traveling through literally dark country roads looking for hidden orphanages.

The actions

Even the French NGOs that benefitted from a national coordination unit had problems identifying and covering the needs of Romanian children placed in state institutions. National and institutional rivalries between humanitarians also undermined the fieldwork. Very quickly, the international anticommunist discourse blaming Ceaușescu for the tragedy of the Romanian children evolved into a severe criticism towards the entire Romanian society. The first obstacle was the decision of the Romanian government to distribute humanitarian aid not to the children, as the donors intended, but to the Army and, eventually, to sell it to the general population. Such a measure undoubtedly answered public demand. Anonymous, ordinary Romanians wrote to the press and public television to ask for a fair distribution of aid: "those handicapped children are going to die anyway, they are unsalvageable, they are garbage, but our children that starve at home are the future of the country".[19] The NGOs' decision to control distribution themselves only reinforced the general perception of the Other, clearly identified as the category of unrecoverable children. One Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) report mentioned:

> When we speak with the [Romanian] staff, we understand that most see the children of the *leagăn*[20] as being different; they cannot see any resemblance with their own. Sometimes I even have the impression that they are no longer "identified" as children, and this observation scares me.[21]

In a second step, the Romanian government reduced by half the budget for childcare institutions and chose to maintain the communist law (3/1970) that widely promoted residential institutions, the opposite of what the international community expected from Romania. During the first post-communist decade, periodical medical examinations and the classification of children as healthy or unrecoverable, with subsequent institutionalization in specialized establishments, continued undisturbed.

The important transnational NGOs divided the Romanian territory between different national branches, while smaller NGOs used Romanian contacts or just randomly picked up its beneficiaries. Subsequently, the repartition of international intervention was uneven among the different regions. Moreover, each organization privileged a certain type of institution. MSF, for example, took over all of the institutions for children in Constanta county, with the exception of the one hosting unrecoverable

children. On the other hand, EquiLibre concentrated its activities on the establishments for unrecoverable children. In some cases, the institutions located closer to Bucharest or to the Western border had the aid of three or even more NGOs at once, not with the best results, as different activity reports showed:

> The Cernavoda *leagăn* received a lot of media coverage and attracted NGOs from all over the world. I don't know how many came with more or less realistic projects. I know the situation of some orphanages where two or even three NGOs fight for the right to work. The Romanian staff no longer knows who to believe, who to refer to and, of course, it is the children who pay the consequences. These "wars" between NGOs revolt me. They are sterile and ridiculous fights. Yet, we are part of the battle.[22]

The same situations had been reported for other institutions, such as the *leagăn* of Vânjuleț for unrecoverable children or the orphanage in Vaslui.

Another characteristic of the humanitarian missions in Romania (but not only) was the unilateral, Western decision, on the nature of aid. The convoys and the humanitarian teams arrived in Romania in total ignorance of the Romanians' real needs. Soon, the humanitarians wrote to their headquarters, describing the awkwardness and the absurdity of the situation:

> The help, which often arrives without warning, from several countries, does not always correspond to the needs of the orphanage. Because of that, we find ourselves in front of a huge pile of clothes in a storage room that has become too small.[23]

Once the humanitarians learned the Romanian reality, they started to acknowledge the false premises that triggered the humanitarian crisis, namely the tragedy of the abandoned Romanian children, as only consequence of the pronatalist communist policies. Both humanitarians and the post-communist authorities believed that renouncing the abortion ban would solve the problem of social orphans. Despite the drop in the birth rate by 38 percent, the number of abandoned children did not decrease at the same rate. In 1996, UNICEF determined that at least 120,000 children were still in the residential system, equally divided between standard orphanages and special schools or homes for deficient children, the same homes that caught the attention of international

mass media and triggered humanitarian intervention in January 1990. Therefore, the humanitarian mission, once again took a new turn, towards development projects:

> Sometimes I wonder what our generous contributions will cost the Romanians. We didn't get it in the first place. Maybe we needed to address the problem of child abandonment by working with families at risk. Development projects certainly have their limits and pitfalls, but can we really escape them? Usually, the North and the South never meet because they do not live in the same reality, because they are different in the very essence of their existence. But Romania is a European country and this is troubling for us. It is an integral part of the northern world and we do not usually equate it with developing countries. So, since the data we had has changed: what place should we take?[24]

Overall, though, the humanitarian missions managed to identify and provide emergency help the most vulnerable categories of institutionalized children: Roma, disabled and those with AIDS. The civil war in former Yugoslavia, alongside the general discontentment towards Romania's unwillingness to reform its residential care system, led to a decline in humanitarian efforts toward the institutionalized children. Important stakeholders, such as MSF, ended their missions in Romania; some (Handicap International) drastically reduced their budgets, while others (Doctors of the World, SERA) transferred their projects to Romanian partners/branches.

The people

A distinction must be made between the different types of Western humanitarian personnel (informally called expats): full time, permanent employees of the NGO's, short time working contracts for 3 up to 12 month called volunteers (*volontaires*) and unpaid volunteers with shorter missions, 1-6 months (*bénévoles*). The time frame of my research coincides with process of "professionalization" of the humanitarian field, this meaning a significant raise of permanent positions. For example, in 1995, MSF had 147 permanent positions (100 at the headquarters) and 352 non-permanent positions for the field operations (80 were short time contracts and the others were volunteers). The ratio between the permanent employees and the volunteers (paid or not) remained 1 to 10. As for the MdM, they had

at the time 258 employees, equally divided between the headquarters and the regional branches and field missions. As a general picture of the staff used by the French humanitarian organizations in 1997, for the field missions, the statistics show 308 permanent positions for expats, 2,677 volunteers with short time working contracts and 33,067 local staff, without clear distinction between paid employees and volunteers. Because of the jobs in the humanitarian field are temporary ones, the total number of expats sent in missions is higher than the number of existing positions. For example, MdM send for its field missions 400-500 persons each year, covering 140 available positions.[25]

A second important characteristic of the humanitarian field is the volatility of its staff. Except for the few permanent positions, all the volunteers (paid or not) involved in field missions had rather short, specific assignments, sometimes even for a couple of days. Far from the romantic image of fearless adventurers that travel the world looking for new challenges, the expats were in many cases well trained professionals: doctors, nurses, educators, psychiatrists, psychologists, engineers, and technical personnel. Catherine Derouette, who came to Romania with MSF remembers:

> At that time, I was looking to change my job. A friend told me about this educational mission in Romania: quite an exceptional program for this NGO specializing in medical emergencies. The particularity of the mission required Médecins sans Frontières to recruit specialists in the fields of education, psychology, physical rehabilitation in order to help institutionalized children. So I applied for a mental health educator job.[26]

Odile Godin, an experienced educator, also joined EquiLibre team as a special educator specialized in ergotherapy and art therapy. She spent 12 months working with children deemed as unrecoverable, at Vânjuleț home for unrecoverable children.[27]

Sometimes, the harsh reality of the field mission made the volunteers quit their assignment earlier, or it was the decision of the headquarters to call them back due to a physical and/or a mental breakdown. It was particularly the case of Romania, where, after working with ill, handicapped, dying children, many expats (over 60% according to estimations) developed serious mental illnesses, determining the NGOs to design a psychological support program for all those working in field missions.[28]

The nature of the humanitarian activity *per se* implies numerous constraints: long working hours, frequent travelling, long separations from family, difficult living conditions. The important number of people coming and leaving a field mission makes it very difficult to retrace the numerical evolution of the personnel.

Although the presence of a hierarchy is not very visible, with a friendly work environment and the informal tone they use to address each other, it still exists. For all transnational NGOs, we can identify two different hierarchies. The first one is what I call the "headquarters" hierarchy, with a president, a board of directors, directors for each national branch, responsible for every field mission. The second one is the hierarchy established inside the field mission. In this case the power relations are more intricate, as the contribution of every team member to the success of the mission is more important than formal hierarchy. After 1990, when the domain started to get professionalized, the NGO's policy was to hire paid, fulltime personnel for at least three field positions: the chief of mission, the administrator and the logistician. They were trusted with most of the decision making, including who, where and when gets help, periodically reports, official communication/negotiation with the local authorities. Although very important for the success of every humanitarian mission, short time volunteers inevitably came last in the chain of decision making.

Another element that should be taken into consideration while analyzing the personnel within a transnational humanitarian NGO in general, and more precisely in a field mission is the nature of the actions carried out: emergency type responses, post-conflict reconstruction and/or development. In the Romanian case, for the first two weeks the humanitarian mission was a response to what was thought to be a military conflict. The MSF and MdM teams sent to Bucharest were composed mostly by physicians with experience in field medicine/military medicine. In only two weeks, the Romanian mission, became an intervention for emergency aid towards the institutionalized children: HIV epidemics, improving the living conditions in the childcare facilities, training the Romanian staff. Later, the initial teams left Romania and new personnel was sent to cover the needs of the mission. The physicians have been replaced with educators and rehabilitation therapists, a highly feminized field, although a substantial number of men started to work in the sector.

If the medical NGOs hired well trained personnel, other NGOs had different approaches and privileged unexperienced, young people or university students looking for a first job experience. Others, like EquiLibre,

also deployed young delinquents included in rehabilitation programs. With no real supervision, many returned to the old habits. Most of them had poor education, no professional skills or experience.[29] Nevertheless, as French expats, they were the ones to evaluate and to lead the local personnel, to the great discontentment of Romanians.

On the field interaction

On the field, the interaction between humanitarians and the Romanian general population seemed more like a battlefield. Young medical professionals or educators had been displaced in remote rural institutions, facing the same harsh living conditions as the Romanian personnel; and the children in care:

> The manager of the *leagăn* showed us around. We went into the kitchen where a strange broth is poured into huge pots, then into the storage room where humanitarian donations were piled up. We will find out later that all clothes are distributed in small quantities, leaving most children in rags. "We must prevent the shortage", will tell us the staff.[30]

In all the cases I studied, the humanitarian staff tried to reform the institutions and the working methods of the Romanian personnel in total disregard of the local know-how:

> We quickly realize that it will be difficult to change habits, preconceived ideas, difficult to work with these women who have not finished treating their own wounds. The Romanian people are traumatized by all these years of communist dictatorship. Their cultural references had to be changed. They are a broken, lost, disoriented people.[31]

Other testimonies openly spoke about the urgency of changing the old habits of the Romanian personnel:

> What strategy could touch the hearts of these women? Because it is indeed a question of carrying out a "heart transplant", of reinventing humanity. The whole team of Médecins sans Frontières" tries to find ways to humanize the life of the *Leagan*, to break unacceptable habits. Yet we know deep within ourselves that what we seek to understand lies beyond these walls,

in the heart of a country massacred with the ax of a dictatorship. We can't find anything to motivate the staff.[32]

The reports sent to the headquarters clearly expressed their frustration while working alongside unskilled, heartless, almost not human characters that actively opposed the 'Western methods':

When I get to the *leagan* that day, I look at her bed, it will be empty now, empty for all eternity. The most terrible shock is not the death of Bogdan, but the reaction of the staff or rather its lack of reaction ... Since my arrival in Romania, I have been trying to understand these women. I know that they have suffered, that they have shielded their hearts in order to survive better, to better accept the unacceptable, they have put a cross on their sensitivity so as not to lose reason. But on this day of mourning, I blame them for their coldness, I blame them for their lack of rebellion and their indifference. I blame them for leaving Bogdan to die. For his death is above all the death of love[…]. I would like to understand the process that began among these women to have come to terms with it, to have succeeded in denying it. Can we go beyond the limits of humanity and remain Human? I believe in any case, that blindness of the heart causes ordinary people to become executioners without realizing it.[33]

On the other hand, the Romanian professionals, many of them anticommunists, Francophiles, maybe even trained abroad, felt betrayed when the Westerners they expected and respected so much publicly called them 'baby killers'. During my interviews, the Romanian personnel refused to explicitly talk about their feelings while working with the humanitarians. I explain the reluctance by the fact that many continued and are still working for/with humanitarian NGOs. On the other hand, the expats understood the feelings of the Romanian personnel: "The 'masters' find themselves relegated to a corner of the room. I feel that they are humiliated, as we express their incompetence into their faces. They throw gloomy glances at us in which envy, disgust, sadness, and disdain are mixed." In her book, Odile Godin, described the humiliation experienced by Romanians and wrote "That evening, the French had shown distressing stupidity, dressed like roosters, young people, some in rehabilitation programs, others unemployed, who had come without any experience, even without culture. They said, with test sheets in hand, to be there to evaluate and to train Romanian teachers. During that evening when you received French and foreign humanitarians, without great

culture, without jobs, self-proclaimed 'leaders' by the power of money offered by the European Community...while you Romanians quoted V. Hugo and Aragon, they afflicted you with their tests and evaluations and prepared to offer you 'the best training'."

As for the general population I will only mention one expression that is still used today "*a fi îmbrăcat ca de la ajutoare*", which literally translates as "to wear clothes donated by the humanitarian aid" and its meaning is to be dressed very poorly/with oversized, dirty clothes.

The difficult relation with the Romanian personnel, but also the official authorities and the general population was considered the main cause for the general blockage of humanitarian projects. The field reports often mentioned the problem:

> We decide to show authority, but we know the pointlessness of this action. This spectacle knocks us out because it sends us back to our helplessness. We see the hidden side of our failure because nothing fundamentally changes. All progress is only at the surface. I am tired, we will not be able to transform anything, we are so far from the hopes we had in the beginning of our mission."[34]

The same feelings of helplessness had been expressed by the MSF final report:

> In the light of our experience in Romania, it is a bit of an observation of helplessness that we want to raise, a wake-up call that we want to sound. Indeed, we have the impression that humanitarian organizations have seen a relatively small impact on the evolution of the situation of orphanages.[35]

"Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners"

So, very quickly the humanitarians felt the need for a better relationship with the beneficiaries. In agreement with the French MSF and MdM, the Belgian MSF, the British FARA and the Danish Red Barnet NGOs, and based on their respective experiences, the Handicap International teams wished to have analysis tools allowing them to better understand the complexity of the individual and collective ways of functioning of their

interlocutors. The preliminary talks stressed two main ideas. On one hand, the expatriate humanitarian personnel, while subjected to the violence of the Romanian institutional functioning, opposed another violence by sometimes trampling the modes of organization of the Romanians, which were also practical solutions for the everyday survival during communism. This type of confrontation most often generated two types of defensive reactions, in the psychological sense: either an increasingly manic activism, or a depressive withdrawal. Both constituted pitfalls that prevented the development of authentic proposals for collaboration and alliance, considering the realities and mentalities of each other. On the other hand, the Romanians did not perceive the humanitarian aid as neutral. Already looking to restore a sense of dignity, Romanians have been extremely sensitive on the nature of the aid, but also on the distribution methods.

Therefore, Handicap International proposed to the European Community to financially support a research under the title *Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners* with the aim of helping to reorient the future actions of Western stakeholders in Romania.

From the very beginning, the initiators wanted a psychological approach that excluded any specific recommendations. The main objective was to provide each reader with elements of understanding those situations likely to influence their behavior or their decision-making towards Romanians. In agreement with the European Commission, the project was entrusted to a Canadian psychoanalyst, Lisette Tardy, with research experience in intercultural phenomena. Initially, the work plan had five phases: The collection of general information on Romania (history, culture, religion) and on NGOs (general philosophy of intervention, mode of operation, evolution of action in Romania); interviews in Romania with expatriate volunteers who had been in the country for at least six months, working at different levels of responsibility and in representative institutions; interviews with Romanians, interlocutors of NGOs at different levels: staff working in childcare institutions; management, officials; transcription of interviews, formatting, writing and publication of the study report in French; broad dissemination to all stakeholders involved in Europe, with actions taken in cooperation with Romania (NGOs, universities, research institutes, organizations specialized in child aid, political figures).

The study was carried out within the framework of NGOs working mainly in childcare institutions. The study included British, Belgian,

French and Danish volunteers, this choice making it possible to broaden the debate and increase the questioning of the East-West relationship. Interviews were carried out with Western volunteers that worked in Romania for at least six months and Romanians working at different levels of responsibility in representative institutions. To these interviews, the lead researcher added meetings with Romanian personalities but also common people that were willing to participate in the study.

Contents

The first version of the document was published in January 1993. It included an Introduction written by the French academic Francis Maqueda in which he described all the difficulties of establishing a human alliance in a context of aid. He highlighted the strong ideas of the study and presented them as the basis of the dialogue which must be established so that all parties can discover each other and erase the prejudices constructed by years of non-communication.

Using concepts specific to psychoanalysis and several works regarding the effects of totalitarian regimes, the study analyzed the behaviors of the Romanians. The research hypothesis was that these actions had been induced by the dictatorial regime. It presents the fall of the regime in December 1989 as a major rupture obliging, of course, Romania to rebuild as society, but also the Romanians to rebuild themselves individually and psychologically.

A first conclusion of the study was that Westerners neglected the dialogue with beneficiaries and did not try to identify what were the real needs and expectations from the humanitarian aid.

According to Tardy,

the Westerners' lack of knowledge of Romania, both in preparation and in the initial relationship with Romanians, created a wound in the relationship. Getting to know the Romanians would have been the first and foremost part of a duty of respect towards them; taking the time to listen to them was to recognize them in the first place, to recognize their existence and to respond to their need for self-esteem.[36]

The feeling of urgency reduced the possibility of properly preparing the Romanian mission in terms of questioning the real needs, knowing the beneficiaries and appealing to their expertise and knowledge. Such a

situation was identified by the study as a trap for any emergency mission. In such circumstances, the humanitarians tend to take over the responsibility of both the decision making and the implementation process. Therefore, the humanitarian aid sometimes turned out to be cumbersome, if not hurtful, both in terms of people and objects.[37] Based on the testimonies she collected from ordinary people during her voyages in Romania, Tardy also mentioned the humiliation felt by the beneficiaries when the highly praised help was in fact a pile of dirty clothes, expired medicines, etc.

According to the survey, Romanians manifested an ambivalent attitude about the presence of humanitarians. The interviews showed that having humanitarian missions on the territory was considered necessary, useful, an expression of the country's openness towards the Western values. At the same time, it represented a hurtful experience that constantly reminded Romanians about the lost time, the lack of courage in opposing the totalitarian regime. Tardy's interesting finding was that common Romanians blamed themselves for not having known about the crimes committed in the institutions for unrecoverable children and the political prisons.[38]

In the attempt to reassess the past, some tried to forget it at all costs, others said that it was important not to forget the communist recent past. Despite of all bitterness and humiliation, Romanians sometimes experienced, as beneficiaries of the humanitarian aid, that the presence of Westerners, as a third party during the post-socialist transition, had a reassuring effect in the Romanian society. For many Romanians, including the authorities and the decision-making management, the Western humanitarians were the guarantee that Romania will quickly recover from the traumatic past.

Nevertheless, the only intentional wrongdoing found in the case of Western NGOs, was their absolute quest for efficiency, a position that pushed them to became complicit with the Romanian desperate situation by taking over responsibilities and initiatives.

The study highlighted the therapeutic function of aid to restore the Romanian's pride: "The mere presence of foreigners, listening to the outside world, should allow Romanians regain the self-esteem, a nation too long deprived of landmarks and contacts with the free world".[39] The study also mentioned the importance of building a working environment and defining each party's role, but also the role of Westerners as mediators between the population and the authorities. The study concluded on the fact that neither Romanians nor Westerners had foreseen the individual

and institutional psychological impact of freedom and of the foreign presence. The European Community, that paid for the study, was not at all satisfied with the results and asked for a panel of 15 Romanian academics to revise the text before publication. In June 1993, Handicap International organized a round table, putting together all the parties involved: authors of the study, representatives of the European Community, NGOs and the 15 Romanian academics.

Romanian feedback

During the event, the representatives of the European Community expressed great disappointment regarding the study. According to them, the work did not consider the bigger socio-economic context; the fact the NGOs (all 1,200 of them in 1993) acted only on the international mass media pressure, without asking what the Romanians really needed and, therefore, the humanitarian effort concentrated only on some institutions and not on the entire state care system. More than that, most of the expats deployed in Romania were professionals in the medical field and had no training or previous expertise in taking over responsibilities concerning the social care. The last important point addressed by the EEC representatives concerned the previous Romanian experiences as donor / beneficiary of aid and cooperation in general, and that Romania had been mostly o donner for the last 50 years, therefore, the know-all attitude showed by the humanitarians caused a great distress for the Romanian population.

The Romanian academics mostly insisted on the idea of "alliance" and what that means to them: namely to have the possibility to regain the confidence, the dignity. For the Romanians, an alliance meant the need for help coming from both partners, partners that respect and know each other, and because of that, maybe cooperation and co-participation would better describe the work of humanitarians in Romania. According to the speakers, an alliance could emerge when the beneficiaries of the humanitarian aid become partners in original solutions. Establishing a relationship of trust and mutual respect would allow the common projects to emerge from the real needs, as identified following a dialogue with the potential beneficiaries. However, listening raises the problem of understanding. This comes from both the quality of empathy, the recognition of the 'Other' and his know-how. Briefly, to be able to put yourself in someone else's position.

The NGO's representatives stood behind the findings of the study, insisting that Romanians suffered from a double culpability, hiding, or not knowing the atrocities committed by the communist regime in the childcare institutions of Romania and the general suspicion towards foreigners, also a consequence of the communist regime. According to them, this double guilt triggered a low self-esteem. Therefore, Romanians could not refuse/react to the humanitarian aid even if they did not agree to it. On the other hand, they acknowledged that the know-all attitude of the Westerners ignored the pride of the Romanians who saw their know-how and abilities completely ignored.

At the end of the meeting, the Romanian participants agreed to make comments on the initial version of the document, but it was up to the author to include it in the final version. As for a future use of the study, the Romanian delegation agreed that such an analysis would not really help the Romanian partners, therefore a Romanian translation would not be very useful. On the contrary, the representatives of the NGOs appreciated that the material would be of great help for the teams of foreign volunteers coming to Romania.

The last conclusion of the meeting was that a true project of alliance is built on mutual trust and the possibility to decide on the acceptance or refuse of a common project.

The outcomes of the project

The European officials stated that the study is in fact useless, and they refused to be involved in the distribution of the published version. Handicap International, as initiator of the project, in a very ambiguous formulation, stated that working with the EEC, in a very rigid framework, did not allow them to reach all the announced objectives and that the study was their last hope to better prepare their staff for the missions in Romania. The final English version did not include the comments made by the Romanian panel. These comments were to be included only in the Romanian version of the document, but I could not find any sources that can confirm the publication of such a document.

As the subsequent events showed, a true, wide reaching dialogue between humanitarians and beneficiaries was never established in post socialist Romania. I shall mention only the scandal surrounding the withdrawal of the MSF mission from Romania, just a year after the

publication of the study dedicated to the possible alliance between humanitarians and beneficiaries.

Conclusions

The political and economic turmoil produced by the fall of the communist regime, corroborated with the discovery of crimes committed in the last 50 years, determined Romanians to endorse, without a thorough analysis, all the solutions the Westerners brought after 1989. The humanitarians, as the study clearly shows, did not had the time, nor the expertise, to properly prepare the Romanian mission and to assess the national and societal specificities. The urgency and development programs had been perceived as top down, artificial policies. In this paper I argue that the reluctance and lack of action the Romanian authorities showed towards the transformation of the childcare system can be explain by two factors. Firstly, the Romanian experts had not been consulted on the general project concerning the deinstitutionalization of Romanian children. As I already showed in my previous research,[40] rather than being a consequence of the pronatalist policy, the placement of certain categories of children into public care was the expression of the state's biopower. Communist authorities actively encouraged (and even forced) those deemed socio-economically unfit to renounce their children: teenage or single mothers, incarcerated parents, victims of alcoholism, and those already subjected to social marginalization (e.g. Roma communities, unemployed, disabled). The communist state aimed to prevent the reproduction of practices that threatened the well-being of the socialist body, not the biological reproduction of the concerned groups. Many Romanian experts, as Mariela Neagu shows in her excellent research,[41] continued to genuinely believe that institutionalization was the best solution for taking care of social orphans. Indeed, the majority if institutionalized children lived in relatively well-equipped institutions, received adequate food, instruction, and medical care. Humanitarians presented the situation of Romanian children in a distorted way, to justify the urgency of their intervention Therefore, Romanian authorities had no reason to abandon the existing organization of the childcare system.

Secondly, during the first decade of the humanitarian mission towards children in Romania, the humanitarians failed to establish a dialogue with the beneficiaries at all levels of authority. At a governmental level, the

chiefs of missions, with the support of diplomats, enforced their decisions on the members of the Romanian government, especially the minister of health, formally in charge with coordinating the humanitarian actions in the Romanian territory. In theory, the minister was the only person that had the prerogative to allow the access of humanitarians in the childcare institutions and to verify that the humanitarian aid reaches the beneficiaries, and no harm is inflected on children. Following a pyramid decision-making model, at local level, the prerogatives of control were exercised by the county responsible for health issues and the direction of each institution. In practice, the Romanian central and local administration never denied the requests of Western humanitarians. As the *Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners* had shown, the attitude of Romanians was not necessarily an expression of rejection towards Western values or indifference towards social orphans. As Andaluna Borcila pointed out, the violent events during the Romanian revolution and the high mediatization of the institutions for unrecoverable children reestablished the distinction between "Them" (the Romanians) and "We" (the Westerners), recalling the segregations of the Cold War.[42] In France, the narrative used during the 1980s, praising the Franco-Romanian friendship, was replaced by a discourse insisting on the 'misery of a country destroyed by communism. Called to take decisions, the Romanian authorities were also under the scrutiny and constant mediatic attacks from the Westerners. The critics and the demands made in all urgency did not consider the bigger socio-economic context (namely the deep economic crisis) and ignored the local know-how, even though most of the expats deployed in Romania were professionals of the medical field and had no training or previous expertise in working, and even less, organizing, a social care system. I argue that the climate created by humanitarians around the problem of institutionalized children determined the Romanian authorities, but also most Romanian specialists, to simply hand over the reform of the childcare system. From the point of view of the Romanian state, the reform was not a priority. As for the specialists, once their expertise was no longer recognized in the post-socialist context, any involvement became obsolete.

NOTES

[1]   Michael, Barnett, "Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and the Practices of Humanity", in *International Theory*, no. 3, 2018, pp. 314–49.

[2]   There is a significant corpus of works on the history of the Red Cross movement, dealing with both the global movement and the particularities of national branches, especially during the Cold War: D. P. Forsythe, *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005. More recent organizations decided to open their archives for the researchers and even to create their own research center, such as MSF-CRASH. A. Vallaeys, *Médecins sans frontières: La biographie*, Fayard, 2004; J.-H. Bradol, C. Vidal, (eds.), *Medical Innovation in Humanitarian Situations. The work of Médecins Sans Frontières*, MSF, 2011, *Global history of Modern Humanitarian Action 2011-2015*, initiative of the Humanitarian Policy Group and United Nations Intellectual History Project (UNIHP) 1999-2010, ran by United Nations.

[3]   D., Laqua (ed), *Internationalism Reconfigured. Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, London, I. BI Tauris, 2011; J. Droux, "L'internationalisation de la protection de l'enfance : acteurs, concurrences et projets transnationaux (1900-1925)", in *Critique internationale*, 2011/3, n°52, pp.17-33, M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity. A History of Humanitarianism*, Cornell University Press, 2011; C. Kantner, *War and* intervention *in the transnational public sphere: problem-solving and European identity-formation*, Routledge, 2016.

[4]   *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, vol. 5, issue 2, "Europe in Transnational movement": Y. Denéchère, "Eastern Europe - A new field of humanitarian history", B. Scutaru, "Local practices of humanitarian aid: Pharmaciens sans frontières Anjou in Romania during the 1990s".

[5]   Yves, Denéchère, and Beatrice, Scutaru, "International adoption of Romanian Children and Romania's admission to the European Union (1990-2007)", *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, p.135-151.

[6]   Foucault Michel, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1972; Gutting Gary, *Michel Foucault's archaeology of scientific reason,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 79.

[7]   Cheryl, McEwan, *Postcolonialism, Decoloniality and Development*, Second edition, Routledge, New York, London, 2019, p. 29; S, Bobby Banerjee, and A. Prasad, "Introduction" to the special issue on "Critical reflections on management and organizations: a postcolonial perspective"", in *Critical perspectives on international business*, Vol. 4 No. 2/3, 2008, p. 91.

[8]   Cheryl, McEwan, *op.cit.,* p. 29.

[9]   *Ibidem.*

[10]   Luciana Jinga, Florin Soare, *Politica demografică a regimului Ceaușescu - Instituții și practici.* Vol. II. Polirom, Iași, 2011, p. 210.

11 Luciana Jinga, "The never forgotten Romanian children: Biopolitics, Humanitarian Aid and International Adoption", in *Child Migration and Biopolitics. Old and New Experiences in Europe*, Beatrice Scutaru, Simone Paoli (eds.), Routledge, 2020, p. 126.

12 Meghan, Sullivan Collins, "Orphaned by History: A Child Welfare Crisis in Romania", in *World Affairs*, Vol. 176, No. 6, 2014, pp: 78–9.

13 Oana Mihăilă, *Adopția. Drept român* și *comparat.* Universul Juridic, București, 2010, p. 23.

14 Luciana Jinga, "The never forgotten Romanian children..", p. 126.

15 Marie Curie IF project (748770 — GenHumChild — H2020-MSCA-IF-2016/ H2020-MSCA-IF-2016, https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/748770/reporting

16 Bernard Kouchner and Adam Michnik, *Mémoires croisées,* Allary, Paris, 2014.

17 Beatrice Scutaru, "Images d'enfants roumains et médias occidentaux. La construction d'une cause (1989-1990)", in *Relations internationales* vol. 161, no. 1, 2015, pp: 100–4.

18 Hotărârea nr. 4 din 8 ianuarie 1992 privind regimul unor bunuri provenite din ajutoare și donații cu caracter umanitar, Publicat în MONITORUL OFICIAL nr. 13 din 5 februarie 1992 [The decision of the Romanian gouvernement no. 4 from 8 January 1992 regarding the regime of goods provided by donations and humanitarian aid], available online at https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/2095 (10.07.2021).

19 Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 95-Doc-Rapports généraux, Rapport final d'activités, avril 1995, file "Article presse1995", file *Rapport de fin de mission en Roumanie.*

20 Orphanage for children aged 0-3 years old.

21 "Lorsque nous parlons avec le personnel, nous comprenons que la plupart considère les enfants du leagan comme des enfants différents; qu'il ne peut pas comparer avec les siens. Quelquefois même, j'ai l'impression qu'ils ne sont plus «pensés» comme des enfants, et cette constatation me fait peur." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 1990, file "Rapports de missions", document *Rapport de mission en Roumanie-Jean Marc C.*

22 "Le *leagan* de Cernavoda a été très médiatisé et attire des ONG des quatre coins du monde. Je ne sais pas combien sont venues avec des projets plus au moins réalistes. Je connais la situation de certains orphelinats où deux voire trois ONG se disputent le droit de travailler. Le personnel ne sait plus qui croire, à qui se référer et, bien sûr, ce sont les enfants qui en payent les conséquences. Ces « guerres » entre les ONG me révoltent. Ce sont des combats stériles et ridicules. Pourtant, nous prenons part à la bataille." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission : *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 1990, file "Rapports de missions", document *Rapport de mission en Roumanie-Therese URRUM.*

23   "L'aide, qui arrive souvent sans prévenir fr plusieurs pays, ne correspond pas toujours aux besoins de l'orphelinat. C'est ainsi que nous nous retouvons devant un tas de vêtements trop grands dans une sale de stockage devenue trop petite", Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission : *Romania*, Box *: Roumanie 1990*, file "Rapports de missions", document *Rapport de formation- H. .Granguillot.*

24   "Quelquefois je me demande ce que couterons aux roumains nos généreuses interventions. Nous n'avons rien compris. Peut-être fallait-il commencer à réduire l'abandon en travaillant auprès des familles à risque. Les projets de développement ont certes leurs limites et leurs pièges, mais pouvons-nous vraiment y échapper ? Le monde du Nord et celui du Sud ne se rencontrent peut-être jamais parce qu'ils ne vivent pas de la même réalité, parce qu'ils sont différents dans l'essence mêle de leur existence. Mais ce qui est troublant, dans le contexte de la Roumanie, vient peut-être du fait que c'est un pays européen. Il fait partie intégrante du monde du Nord et nous ne l'assimilons pas aux pays en voie de développement. Alors, puisque les données que nous connaissons sont changées : quelle place devons-nous prendre?", Catherine Derouette, *Au nom des enfants oubliés de Roumanie,* Foreword by Xavier Emmanuelli, Harmattan, Paris, 2001.

25   Phillippe Ryfman, *La question humanitaire : histoire, problématiques, acteurs et enjeux de l'aide humanitaire internationale*, éditions Ellipses, Paris, 1999, pp. 130-193.

26   "A cette époque, je cherchais à changer de travail. Une amie m'avait parlé de cette mission éducative en Roumanie: programme assez exceptionel pour cette ONG spécialisée dans l'urgence médicale. La particularité de l'intervention demandait à «Médecins sans Frontières» de recruter des spécilialistes dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la psychologie, de la rééducation motrice pour venir en aide à une catégorie d'enfants différents. Il s'agisait donc pour moi d'un travail d'éducatrice en santé mentale" (French in original), Catherine Derouette, *op.cit.*

27   Personal Interview with Odile Godin, 14.04.2019

28   Personal Interview with C.V. Lyon, 07.02.2018.

29   Michel, Deprost, *EquiLibre: Une faillite humanitaire*, Editons Golias, Villeurbanne, 2003, pp. 68-69.

30   "La responsable du *leagan* nous fait visiter les lieux. Nous passons dans les cuisines où ,mijote un étrange bouillon dans d'immenses marmites, puis dans la salle de stockage où s'entassent les dons humanitaires. Nous découvrirons plus tard que tous les vêtements sont distribués au compte-gouttes, laissant la majorité des enfants en loque. «Il faut prévenir le manque» nous dira le personnel." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Bo : Roumanie 1990, file "Rapports de missions", document *Rapport de fin de mission-Philippe P.*

31 "Nous prenons rapidement conscience qu'il sera difficile de changer les habitudes, les idées préconçues, difficile de travailler avec ces femmes qui n'ont pas fini de soigner leurs propres blessures. Le peuple roumain est traumatisé par toutes ces années de dictature communiste. Leurs références culturelles ont dû être modifiées. C'est un peuple brisé, perdu, désorienté." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 1990, file "Rapports de missions", document *Rapport de la formation des infirmieres.*

32 "Quelle stratégie pourrait bien toucher le cœur de ces femmes? Car il s'agit bien là de réaliser une «greffe de cœur», de réinventer l'humanité. Toute l'équipe de «Médecins sans Frontières» tente de trouver des chemins pour humaniser la vie du Leagan, pour casser des habitudes inacceptables. Nous savons pourtant au fond de nous-même que ce que nous cherchons à comprendre se trouve au-delà de ces murs, au cœur d'un pays massacré à la hache d'une dictature. Nous ne trouvons rien pour motiver le personnel." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 1990, file "Rapports de missions"*,* document *Rapport de formation-* H. Granguillot.

33 "Lorsque j'arrive au *leagan* ce jour-là, je regarde son lit, il sera vide désormais, vide pour l'éternité. Le plus terrible choc n'est pas la morte de Bogdan, mais la réaction du personnel ou plutôt son absence de réaction...Depuis mon arrivé en Roumanie, je cherche à comprendre ces femmes. Je sais qu'elles ont souffert, qu'elles ont blindé leur cœur pour mieux survivre, pour mieux accepter l'inacceptable, elles ont mis une croix sur leur sensibilité pour ne pas perdre la raison. Mais en ce jour de deuil, je leur en veux pour leur froideur, je leur en veux de leur absence de révolte et de leur indifférence. Je leur en veux d'avoir laissé mourir Bogdan. Car sa mort est avant tout la mort de l'amour [...] Je voudrais comprendre le processus qui s'est enclenché chez ces femmes pour s'en être accommodées, pour avoir réussi à la nier. Peut-on dépasser les limites de l'humanité et rester *Homme*? Je crois en tout cas, que la cécité du *cœur* entraine des gens ordinaires à devenir des bourreaux sans s'en rendre compte." Catherine Derouette, *op.cit.*

34 "Nous décidons de faire preuve d'autorité et de confisquer les bâtons, mais nous savons l'inutilité de cette action. Ce spectacle nous assomme parce qu'il nous renvoie à notre impuissance. Nous voyons la face cachée de notre échec, car rien ne change en profondeur. Tout progrès n'est que surface. Je suis fatiguée, nous ne pourrons rien transformer, nous sommes si loin des espérances de notre début de mission." (French in original), *Ibidem.*

35 "A la lumière de notre expérience en Roumanie, c'est un peu un constat d'impuissance que nous voulons dresser, une sonnette d'alarme que nous voulons tirer. Nous avons en effet l'impression que les organisations humanitaires ont vu un impact relativement restreint sur l'évolution de la situation des orphelinats." (French in original), Archive Doctors Without

177

Borders, Mission: *Romania*, Box: Roumanie 95-Doc-Rapports généraux, Rapport final d'activités, avril 1995, file "Article presse1995", file *Rapport de fin de mission en Roumanie.*
[36] Handicap International Archives (HIA), "Report on the project "Study on the difficulties of the Alliance between Romanians and Westerners", p. 5.
[37] "They come with this attitude, like we don't know anything, like we had lived in a black void" (French in original), *ibidem*, p. 6.
[38] *Ibidem*, p.7.
[39] *Ibidem*, p. 10-11.
[40] Luciana Jinga, "The never forgotten Romanian children..,"
[41] Mariela Neagu, *Voices from the Silent Cradles. Life Histories of Romania's Looked-After Children,* Policy Press, 2021.
[42] Andaluna, Borcila, *American Representations of Post-Communism: Television, Travel Sites and PostCold War Narratives*, New York, Routledge, 2014, 80-89.

Bibliography

***, "Global history of Modern Humanitarian Action" 2011-2015, initiative of the Humanitarian Policy Group and United Nations Intellectual History Project (UNIHP) 1999-2010, ran by United Nations, 93–117.

Barnett, Michael, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, Cornell, Ithaca, NY, 2011.

___ "Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and the Practices of Humanity." *International Theory 10, no.* 3 (2018): 314–49. doi:10.1017/S1752971918000118

Bobby Banerjee, S. and Prasad, A., "Introduction" to the special issue on "Critical reflections on management and organizations: a postcolonial perspective"", in *Critical perspectives on international business*, Vol. 4 No. 2/3, 2008, pp. 90-98 https://doi.org/10.1108/17422040810869963

Borcila, Andaluna, *American Representations of Post-Communism : Television, Travel Sites and PostCold War Narratives*, New York, Routledge, 2014

Carpenter, R. Charli, "'Women and Children First': Gender, Norms, and Humanitarian Evacuation in the Balkans1991-95", in *International Organisation*, volume 57, Issue 4, Fall 2003, pp. 661-694.

Comité Permanent Inter-organisation (IASC)**,** "Femmes, Filles, Garçons et Hommes. Des Besoins Différents, Des chances égales. Guide pour l'intégration de l'égalité des sexes dans l'action humanitaire", 2018, disponible en ligne, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/Gender%20Handbook%20-%20French%20FINAL.pdf

Denéchère, Yves and Scutaru Béatrice, "International adoption of Romanian children and Romania's admission to the European Union (1990-2007)", *Eastern Journal of European Studies, Centre for European Studies*, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 135-151 http://ejes.uaic.ro/articles/EJES2010_0101_DEN.pdf (accessed 25 March 2014).

Denéchère, Yves, "L'adoption des « enfants de Ceaușescu » : Un fait social au coeur des relations franco-roumaines dans les années 1980", in *Les cahiers d'Histoire Immédiate*, Groupe de recherche en histoire immédiate, Dossier Spécial Roumanie, 2013, pp.171-184.

Derouette Catherine, *Au nom des enfants oubliés de Roumanie*, Foreword by Xavier Emmanuelli, Harmattan, Paris, 2001.

Doboş, Corina, Luciana Jinga, et Florin Soare, *Politica demografică a regimului Ceaușescu - O perspectivă comparativă.* Polirom, Iași, 2010.

Forsythe, D. P., *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction,* Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

___ "*Society must be defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France.* Trans. by David Macey. New York: Picador, 2003.

___*Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977 – 78*, Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

___*The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*, 1978-79, trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Gatrell, Peter, *Free World? The campaign to save the world's refugees, 1956-1963,* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Gutting, Gary, *Michel Foucault's archaeology of scientific reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,1989.

Jinga, Luciana, Florin Soare, Corina Doboș, and Cristina Roman, *Politica demografică a regimului Ceaușescu - Instituții și practici.* Vol. II. Polirom, Iași, 2011.

Jinga, Luciana, *Gen si reprezentare în România Comunistă, 1944-1989,* Polirom, Iași, 2015.

____ "The never forgotten Romanian children: Biopolitics, Humanitarian Aid and International Adoption", *Child Migration and Biopolitics. Old and New Experiences in Europe*, Beatrice Scutaru, Simone Paoli (eds.), Routledge, 2020

____ "At the rescue of Ceaușescu's Children: International adoption of Romanian institutionalised children during the 1990's." Paper presented at Children's History Society Biennial Conference, "Children and Youth on the Move", University of Greenwich, UK, 21- 23 June, 2018.

Kantner, C., *War and intervention in the transnational public sphere: Problem-solving and European identity-formation*, Routledge, 2016.

Kouchner, Bernard and Adam, Michnik, *Mémoires croisées,* Paris, Allary, 2014.

Laqua, D. (ed**.**), *Internationalism Reconfigured. Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, I. BI Tauris, London 2011.

Magone, C., Neuman, M., Weismann, F. (eds.), *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed The MSF Experience*, Hurst and Co., 2014.

McEwan, Cheryl, *Postcolonialism, Decoloniality and Development*, Second edition, Routledge, New York, London, 2019

Neagu, Mariela*, Voices from the Silent Cradles. Life Histories of Romania's Looked-after Children,* Policy Press, 2021.

Paulmann, Johannes, "Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid during the Twentieth Century", in *Humanity*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2013, 215-238.

Pirrote, Gautier, *L'épisode humanitaire roumain. Construction d'une « crise », état des lieux et modalités de sortie*, L'Harmattan**,** Paris, 2006.

Ryfman, Philippe, *La question humanitaire. Histoire, problématiques, acteurs et enjeux de l'aide humanitaire internationale*, Ellipses, Paris ,1999.

Scutaru, Béatrice, "Images d'enfants roumains et médias occidentaux. La construction d'une cause (1989-1990)", *Relations internationales* vol. 161, no. 1, 2015, pp. 95-112. doi:10.3917/ri.161.0095.

Sullivan, Meghan Collins, "Orphaned by History: A Child Welfare Crisis in Romania." *World Affairs*, Vol. 176, No. 6, 2014, pp. 78-84.
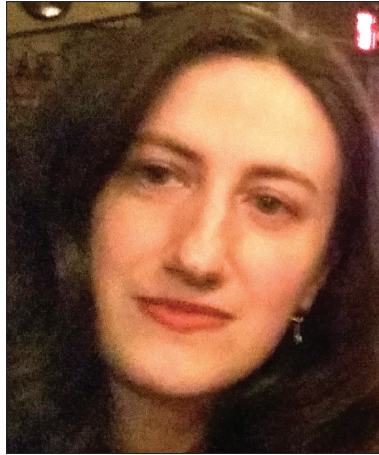
IOANA MANEA

Born in 1981, in Romania

Ph.D., Université Paris-Sorbonne (2008)
Dissertation: *La Pensée de l'autorité chez F. de La Mothe Le Vayer*

Present professional affiliation: Georg-August Universität Göttingen

Fellowships and grants
Junior Research Fellowship, Lichtenberg-Kolleg, The Göttingen Institute of
Advanced Study (2014-2015)
Institut d'Études Avancées de Nantes (2013)
Fellowship program "Research in Paris", École Pratique des Hautes Études
(2012-2013)
Université de Fribourg (2011-2012)
Résidence de création, Romanian Cultural Institute in Paris (2010)
Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Paris IV (2005-2008)

Participation to conferences in France, UK, US, Canada, Romania

Book
Politics and Scepticism in La Mothe Le Vayer. The Two-Faced Philosopher?,
Narr, 2019

COPING WITH DOUBT IN HISTORY: UNCERTAINTY AND ARBITRARINESS IN THE WRITING ABOUT THE GREAT ORIENTAL EMPIRES (1670'S-1730'S)[1]

Abstract

My study is based on a corpus made of three books about the Oriental empires written by the French libertine François Bernier, the Polish Jesuit Judas Thaddeus Krusinski and the Moldavian Prince Dimitrie Cantemir. In analyzing these three works, my research is, on the one hand, interested in their approach to uncertainty in history and, on the other hand, on their emphasis on the importance of arbitrary events, which seem apparently insignificant. In so doing, my article argues that the works belonging to Bernier, Krusinski and Cantemir are not histories with a linear development, exclusively based on heroic figures that perform extraordinary actions.

Keywords: history, doubt, uncertainty, plausibility, arbitrariness

[…] but I intend to push much further my reasoning, and to lead to the obvious acknowledgement of the fact that there is almost no certainty in everything that the most famous historians that we have had so far tell, and that most probably those, who will choose the same activity in the future, will not at all be more successful in all their attempts.

[…] mais je prétends pousser bien plus outre mon raisonnement, et faire reconnaître manifestement, qu'il n'y a presque nulle certitude en tout ce que débitent les plus fameux historiens, que nous ayons eus jusqu'ici, et que vraisemblablement ceux, qui prendront la même occupation à l'avenir, ne réussiront guère mieux en toutes leurs entreprises.[2]

In *Du peu de certitude qu'il y a dans l'histoire* (1668), La Mothe Le Vayer questions the epistemological pretences of history. Highlighted by contradictory accounts of the same events, the weakness intrinsic to history is, according to him, the result of the unavoidable passions animating its authors and of the conventions of a genre constructed around elevated motives expressed in an elevated style.[3] A famous intellectual of his time, whose reputation, based on a vast erudition, brought him, among others, the election to the Académie française (1639), as well as the acquaintance with the most elitist power circles of his time,[4] La Mothe Le Vayer founds his distrust of history, to which he attributes mostly the value of a moral lesson, on his practice of a Scepticism highly indebted to Pyrrhonism. Despite the irreconcilable differences that separate him from Descartes, La Mothe Le Vayer actually does share with the author of the *Discours de la méthode* the suspicion towards history. Placed outside the realm of "clear and distinct ideas", history can be, at the most, "plausible" and is, therefore, excluded by Descartes from the field of "science".[5] Coming from otherwise strongly opposed sides, the combined attacks of the Sceptics and the Cartesians provoke a "crisis" of history.[6]

Naturally, it is worth asking what the relevance of the "crisis" undergone by history during the second half of the 17th century and the beginning of the next century is for three works that achieved public recognition precisely because of their narration of historical events. Written by François Bernier, the *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol* is included into a work entitled *Voyages* whose initial first edition from 1670-1671 was followed until the end of the century by other editions in French as well as by translations in English, German, Italian and Dutch.[7] Belonging to the Polish Jesuit father Judas Thaddeus Krusinski, the *Histoire de la dernière révolution de Perse* (The Hague, 1728), a French translation from the original Latin one, was at the origin of other subsequent translations until the 1740's into German, English, Turkish or even, again, Latin.[8] Authored by the Moldavian Prince Dimitrie Cantemir, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* (1734-1735), an English translation from the original Latin version, was at the origin of two other French and German translations from the 1740's.[9] In its own particular way, each of the three works enjoyed success. Bernier's work was initially well received by the fashionable circles of the "salons", Krusinki's history left its print on the later versions about the disorders of Persia at the beginning of the 18th century, while Cantemir's book consolidated the reputation of its author as a scholar of the Orient.[10]

In accordance with the European tendency to think of the Orient in terms of "large political units",[11] the three works deal with three great Oriental empires, namely the Mughal, the Safavid and the Ottoman, which they present in a critical stage of their history (crisis, gradual decline or utter collapse). Though they all belonged to what was broadly known as the "Orient", the three empires previously mentioned were, at the time, clearly distinguished. The Ottoman Empire had been considered for a long time the major threat for Europe and, moreover, dominated Cantemir's Moldavia. Regarded as a possible ally against the Ottomans, the Safavid Empire was highly admired by the Europeans for its ancient culture, refined customs, curiosity for other cultures and relative religious tolerance.[12] As for the Mughal Empire, the farthest in geographical terms, through aspects like its architecture or philosophy, it certainly gained the appreciation of Bernier. The success of the books by Bernier, Krusinski and Cantemir is likely to result from the Western interest in an Orient seen as "our closest Other" ("notre Autre le plus proche") to which the travel accounts provided a "reality flavour" ("saveur de réalité") but did not entirely deprive of the "wonderful strangeness of the romance" ("la merveilleuse étrangeté du romanesque").[13] Hence, in analyzing the histories by Bernier, Krusinski and Cantemir, my study will not only take into account the fact that they are about an Orient that preserved a part of mystery, but also the objections that history had to face towards the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the next century.

With respect to the "epistemological condemnation" ("condemnation épistémologique")[14] of history, Bernier seems to have been the most audacious of the three writers, since he published his *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol* in the Paris of the 1670's, a place and a time when the crossfire of Pyrrhonians and Cartesians against history was intense.[15] Though he does not mention the objections to history that were raised at the time, Bernier is certainly careful to prove that he is a trustworthy author. In so doing, he emphasizes that he was firstly admitted in the entourage of Shah Jahan, the ancient ruler of the Mughal empire, and afterwards became the friend of Daneshmend Khan, whom he considered "the most erudite man of Asia" ("le plus savant homme de l'Asie") and "one of the most powerful and appreciated *omrahs*, or gentlemen of the court" ("un des plus puissants et des plus considérés *omrahs*, ou seigneurs de la cour").[16] Hence, Bernier writes his account as a "privileged eyewitness"[17] who, in addition to the access to the highest power circles of the empire, was also in direct contact with the Indian

world. His observation of the Mughal Empire, which went as deep as the most restricted corridors of power, was certainly facilitated by his knowledge of the Persian language.

On several occasions, Bernier mentions that he had the chance to witness directly some of the most dramatic events which were the outcome of the war that the four sons of Shah Jahan waged against each other in order to become the unique rulers of the Mughal Empire. For instance, after having carefully prepared it, he managed to have a good view of the memorable event represented by the crossing of New Delhi by a defeated and publicly humiliated Dara, the eldest of the four brothers.[18]

Though he had the opportunity to observe in an unmediated way some of the most notable events of the fratricide war that devastated the Mughal Empire before Aurangzeb managed to vanquish his three brothers, Bernier was obviously unable to witness all the events that he relates in order to give substance to his history. In order to fill in the gaps in his direct knowledge of the events, he is forced to rely on hearsay. In so doing, he does not try to hide the difficulty to establish the truth which results mostly from the different versions of the same event. In some cases, the fact that there is more than one account of the same event is mentioned as subsidiary information. For example, the temporary defection of Sultan Mahmoud, Aurangzeb's son, to Sultan Shuja, his father's adversary, is given two possible reasons. In addition to Mahmoud's exaggerated ambition, Bernier also mentions, though only "incidentally", Aurangzeb's possible manipulation of his son:

> I see myself forced to write here incidentally what several people told me: that the entire escape of Sultan Mahmoud had only taken place because of the artifices and plots of Aurangzeb, who did not care at all that he endangered his son in the attempt to bring about the loss of Shuja and who was very pleased that, in any case, this was for him a specious pretext for putting him in a safe place.

> Je crois devoir marquer ici en passant ce que plusieurs m'ont dit: que toute cette escapade de Sultan Mahmoud ne s'était faite que par les artifices et par les ressorts d'Aurangzeb, qui ne se souciait guère de hasarder ce fils pour tâcher de perdre Shuja et qui était bien aise qu'en tout cas ce lui fût un prétexte spécieux pour le mettre en lieu de sûreté.[19]

Confirmed by several testimonies, as well as, implicitly, by Aurangzeb's image as an unscrupulous ruler, this latter explanation seems nevertheless

to be considered less plausible than the former one since it is only presented as a side addition to the main argument of Mahmoud's disloyalty to his father. However, the fact that there is a slight uncertainty about the understanding of Mahmoud's real motives for his action is highlighted by the concession connector introducing the next phrase, which focuses on the concrete consequences of the son's betrayal: "In any case, afterwards he [Aurangzeb] showed that he was very disgusted by him [Sultan Mahmoud] and eventually sent him a very displeasing letter by means of which he ordered him to come back to Delhi, while at the same time giving a strict order that he should not come so far […]" ("Quoiqu'il en soit, il [Aurangzeb] témoigna après être fort dégoûté de lui [Sultan Mahmoud] et lui écrivit enfin une lettre fort désobligeante par laquelle il lui ordonnait de revenir en Delhi, donnant cependant bon ordre qu'il ne vînt pas jusque-là […]).[20]

In other cases, the several divergent accounts of the same fact bring Bernier to the open conclusion that it is impossible to understand what really happened. For instance, the disappearance of Sultan Shuja's body after the battle that had probably caused his death was explained in several ways. According to one account, Shuja fled into the mountains in the vicinity of the battlefield accompanied by only a small group of loyal people. Another version held that his corpse had been found, but in a hardly recognizable state. All in all, since he "heard the thing told in three or four different manners by the persons themselves who had been in that place" ("ouï raconter la chose de trois ou quatre manières différentes par des personnes mêmes qui s'étaient trouvées en ce lieu"), Bernier concludes that "it is quite difficult to know in truth what became of him [Sultan Shuja] ("qu'il est assez difficile de savoir au vrai ce qu'il [Sultan Shuja] est devenu").[21]

Though it certainly makes the truth hardly reachable, the existence of different reports of one and the same event does not always make it entirely impossible to know what happened, at least to a certain extent. For example, Bernier mentions the two different stories that he heard about the death of Shah Nawaz Khan, whose betrayal during a decisive battle caused Dara's defeat and, eventually, his death. While according to one story Shah Nawaz Khan was killed by Dara himself, according to the other he was murdered by "people from the army of Aurangzeb [Dara's chief adversary], who, being secrets adepts of Dara, found a way to approach him and to get rid of him, fearing that he may have revealed that he had some knowledge of the letters they had written to Dara" ("gens de l'armée

d'Aurangzeb [le grand adversaire de Dara], qui, étant partisans secrets de Dara, trouvèrent moyen de l'aborder et de s'en défaire, appréhendant qu'il ne les découvrît et qu'il n'eût quelque connaissance des lettres qu'ils avaient écrites à Dara").[22] Despite avoiding making a clear choice between the two contradictory stories, Bernier expresses a certain preference for the second one, which he considers "more plausible" ("plus vraisemblable").[23]

The three examples that have been analyzed prove that Bernier tries neither to fill in the gaps in the stories that sometimes flesh out the history that he writes, nor to hide the uncertainty that is inseparable from some of them. Hence, at times he seems to adopt the Pyrrhonian "suspension of judgement" (*épokhè*), which is the consequence of the impossibility to choose among different views of the same phenomenon. Nonetheless, despite sometimes admitting the uncertainty, in some cases he does opt for one of the various conflicting versions of the same event, the one which he finds more plausible than the others. By accepting the plausibility ("vraisemblance"), which approaches truth but does not coincide with it, he behaves like a disciple of Gassendi, who opened the way for the rehabilitation of history against the Pyrrhonians' and the Cartesians' attacks. In the opinion of Gassendi, since they do not have access to the essence of the world, but only to its appearances, individuals can reach a more modest truth, which depends on a "moral certainty" ("certitude morale") based on greater or smaller degrees of probability.[24] Founded on the "more probable" or the "more plausible", the knowledge argued for by Gassendi does not rely only on the direct experience of the senses, but also on the indirect one resulting from the testimonies of others. Among other things, Gassendi elaborates some criteria of acceptance of the testimonies, which underlie the possibility of a historical knowledge that is founded on a balance between confidence and criticism. As far as he is concerned, Bernier, in tune with Gassendi, seeks to convey a more limited knowledge, which derives from an approach that, despite being aware of the impossibility to eliminate uncertainty, does not abandon the quest for all knowledge of the historical events.

Unlike Bernier, who was the adept of an intellectual freedom that made him count among the "libertines" and attracted him to a philosophical thinking which, in some cases, was quite daring according to the standards of the time,[25] Krusinki was a Jesuit. Educated in the Polish Jesuit schools and colleges, he was sent to the Safavid Empire as a missionary, in the wide context of the efforts taken by the Polish State in order to include the Persians in a great coalition against the Ottomans.[26] During the almost

twenty years he spent in Persia he did not only act in favor of the cause of Catholicism but, thanks to his broad knowledge of Oriental languages, he also fulfilled several diplomatic missions for the Safavid court. Additionally, because of his pretended medical knowledge, he was accepted into the power circles of the Afghan conquerors, to whom he remained close until his departure from Persia in 1725.

Though originally written in Latin, his account of the fall of Ispahan mostly circulated in the French edition of another Jesuit, Jean-Antoine du Cerceau. As he himself acknowledges in the "Preface," du Cerceau did not only translate Krusinski's text, but also changed its structure, in order to make it more chronologically consistent, and complemented it with information from contemporary journals about the events that happened after 1725.[27] In so doing, du Cerceau draws the public's attention to the distinction between, on the one hand, the information coming from du Cerceau and, on the other, information from sources:

> I make here these observations in order to warn the reader about the fact that he must establish a great difference in terms of certainty between the facts following the year 1725 that I only took from the public news and that I only very briefly dealt with towards the end of my second volume, and the previous facts which are all founded on the certain and faithful reports of father Krusinski.
>
> Je fais ici ces observations pour avertir le lecteur, qu'il doit mettre une grande différence pour la certitude, entre les faits postérieurs à l'année 1725 que je n'ai tirés que des nouvelles publiques, et que j'ai traités fort succinctement sur la fin de mon second volume, et les faits antérieurs qui sont tous fondés sur les mémoires sûrs et fidèles du père Krusinski.[28]

The sharp superiority of Krusinski's account follows from the fact that it pertains to the "faithful and precise memories of an intelligent and objective man, who only presents either what he himself saw, or what he found out from the mouth of the most well informed and authorized ministers of both parties" ("mémoires fidèles et précis d'un homme intelligent et désintéressé, qui n'expose que ce qu'il a vu lui-même, ou ce qu'il a appris de la bouche propre des ministres les mieux instruits, et les plus autorisés des deux partis").[29] An author who understands the events that he writes about, does not have a bias towards any of the parties involved and provides an accurate narration of the facts, the Polish Jesuit founds his history on first-rate testimonies. In so doing, he adds to his

own direct experience of eyewitness the hearsay information obtained from the most reliable sources because of their privileged position in the government.

According to du Cerceau, while Krusinki's history distinguishes itself from other histories of the fall of Ispahan through "the truth and the certainty of facts" ("la vérité et la certitude des faits"), the information from the journals tells the events "in a way quite uncertain and always very vague" ("d'une façon assez incertaine et toujours fort vague").[30] As a proof in favour of his argument about the weak credibility of the information in the journals, du Cerceau refers to one of the articles of the peace agreement between Shah Ashraf and the Ottoman sultan, which he found in the news, but which he did not include in his account, because he found it in no way "plausible" ("vraisemblable").[31] The article stipulated that Shah Ashraf and his emissaries would be received in Istanbul and other towns of the Ottoman Empire like authentic Muslims, "*despite the difference of opinions that made the Turks and the Persians consider each other heretics*" ("*malgré la différence des opinions qui ont donné lieu aux Turcs et aux Persans de se regarder mutuellement comme hérétiques*").[32] Making use of his knowledge of the ethnic and religious divisions within the Muslim world, du Cerceau assesses the article and reaches the conclusion that it would have been valid for the Safavid rulers, who were disciples of the Shia Islam, but cannot apply to the Afghans who, just like the Ottomans, practized Sunni Islam.

Moreover, despite emphasizing the reliability of Krusinski's account, du Cerceau does not hesitate to indicate the corrections that he made to it. For example, concerning the year of Mirwais' death, the charismatic founder of the dynasty that would eventually conquer Ispahan, du Cerceau mentions having settled the hesitations revealed by Krusinki's manuscript itself. By confronting the two dates with other pieces of information from the same work and, moreover, by expressing his awareness of the uncertain identity of the author who added the second date, du Cerceau chooses for his edition of Krusinki's history the year 1717, which has been struck out from the manuscript.[33] In addition to the material elements, another aspect that argues for 1717 as the year when Mirwais died belongs to the chronological coherence of the text: if the Afghan leader had died in 1713 instead of 1717, his son, Mahmud, would have been only fourteen years old when he proclaimed himself prince of Kandahar and leader of the Afghans, a situation which, in du Cerceau's mind, is "beyond any plausibility" ("hors de toute vraisemblance").[34]

Obviously, in amending Krusinski's text or remedying its omissions, du Cerceau does not try to establish what was certain, but what was merely plausible. In so doing, he may have been influenced not by Gassendi, but by his fellow Jesuits, who also defended history against Pyrrhonians and Cartesians. In their argumentation for history, Jesuits like Rapin and Le Moyne relied on the humanist *Artes historicae*, which elaborated on Cicero's *De Oratore*.[35] Consequently, they argued for a history based on a certainty at a human scale, which was different from the sophists' lie or the poets' fiction and was the result of the historians' ability to interpret sources, to write and comment upon events. History was perceived as similar to rhetoric. While rhetoric was seen as a persuasion method founded on a probabilistic reasoning, history was attributed the capacity to provide a knowledge and an ethical instruction that were based on probabilities. Although, in his "Preface", he stresses the informative value of the work which he translates and partly edits, in his concrete approach to it, du Cerceau at least partly relies on what appears plausible or probable.

Unlike the works by Bernier and Krusinski, which enjoyed an immediate success, the book of Dimitrie Cantemir drew the attention of scholars only some fifty years after its publication.[36] Contrary to the histories of Bernier and Krusinski, which were accessible to a wide public, Cantemir's history was likely to appeal to a narrower public, with a curiosity that went beyond the interest in exoticism or the spectacular news of the day. Besides that, it is worth highlighting that although Cantemir himself did not belong to the cultural space of Western Europe, during the first decades of the 18th century, when the first translations of his work were published, the Western writing of the Islamic history still struggled to find a place of its own in the intellectual landscape of the time. In so doing, the Western European scholars needed to cope with several major obstacles: in addition to the philological and conceptual challenges inherent to the study of a different civilization, the study of the Islamic history had to face the animosity towards Islam accumulated during centuries as well as the fact that Islamic history was not the classical history which, since humanism, had been considered as a reservoir of moral and political models.[37]

As far as he was concerned, Cantemir founded his writing of the *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* on his good acquaintance with the Ottoman world. Because of his family's position as well as the political and diplomatic relations between his native Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire, between 1688 and 1710, he spent around twenty years in Istanbul.[38] During this time, besides fulfilling political and diplomatic

functions, he also accomplished the education that he had already started in Moldavia. Moreover, he seems to have been familiar with some of the ambassadors of the great European powers in Istanbul as well as with the Ottoman political and intellectual elites. More precisely, he became close to some prominent Ottoman scholars and, thanks also to his musical talent, managed to gain the appreciation of the Ottoman court. Completed during his exile in Russia, provoked by the defeat in the battle of Stănileşti (1711), the *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* was published only posthumously, through the efforts of his son, Antioh. The original Latin version of the work was found only in 1984 by Virgil Cândea, in the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

Since he only had a mediated and partial access to the Western culture and since, moreover, the precise sources of his scholarship still remain to be studied, it is hardly possible to establish any precise connection between his history of the Ottoman Empire and the "crisis" that history underwent in Western Europe towards the second half of the 17th century and the beginning of the next century. Though he does not make any clear reference to Scepticism, Cantemir acknowledges ever since the very beginning of his work his incapacity to write a history that reveals only the absolute truth:

> For, since we would be unable to narrate even what happens in front of our eyes in such a way that our story could be considered, in every regard, accomplished and faultless, who else than a madman would dare to claim that he will depict, without any deviation, things that happened so many centuries ago, among people so barbarian and so devoid of civilization (like the Ottoman one, at its beginnings)?! This will become obvious from the development of the work itself, all the more, since we will depict and struggle to rectify what has been inaccurately said or written by quite a few historians with otherwise great authority. And whether or not we have been successful in our achievement, we leave the assessment to the reader, "he who is most wise".

> Căci, de vreme ce nici cele ce se petrec dinaintea ochilor noştri n-am fi în stare să le istorisim astfel încât povestirea noastră să poată fi socotită, în orice privinţă, desăvârşită şi lipsită de greşeli, cine altul, decât un smintit, ar cuteza să afirme că va înfăţişa, fără vreo abatere, lucruri care s-au petrecut cu atâtea veacuri în urmă, printre neamuri atât de barbare şi de lipsite de civilizaţie (cum era cel othman, la începuturile sale)?! Aceasta se va vădi din însuşi şirul lucrării, cu atât mai mult, cu cât vom înfăţişa şi ne vom strădui să îndreptăm cele spuse sau scrise pe dos de către nu

puțini istorici, de altfel cu o mare autoritate. Iar de noi vom fi dobândit o mai fericită reușită, judecata o lăsăm în seama Cititorului […] <celui foarte plin de discernământ>.[39]

Pertaining to the convention of *captatio benevolentiae*, the modesty of the historian seems to be the consequence of his awareness of the incommensurable discrepancy between the difficulty of the task that he sets for himself and the weaknesses intrinsic to any human being, from which he is not spared. The humble approach to historical truth is all the more legitimate since his practice of the historical writing is partly based on the audacious criticism of many other illustrious historians, who enjoyed a well-established reputation. In order to avoid complacency, he joins to the criticism of his fellow historians the criticism of himself. In so doing, he resorts to the rhetorical strategy which consists in flattering the readers and leaving to them the final assessment of his possible achievements, from which he modestly seems to refrain.

At times, the uncertainty of history seems to be another rhetorical device, which is used in order to highlight Cantemir's originality. For example, in the case of the Ottomans' origins, he emphasizes that it is almost impossible to choose among the multiplicity of divergent views:

If we stop and search more accurately for the origin of the Ottoman people, who holds now the Turkish scepter, we run into such a diversity of opinions (that we presented more extensively in the Preface) and such an amass of stories entangled by foreigners that for those who are at crossroads there hardly appears a distinction between what would be true and what would be false […]

Dacă vom sta și cerceta mai curat obârșia stirpei Aliothmanice, care deține acum sceptrul turcesc, ne întâmpină o atare diversitate de păreri (pe care le-am văzut mai pe larg în Prefață), și o asemenea îngrămădire de povești încâlcite între ele de străini, încât abia de mai apare vreo deosebire, pentru cei aflați la răscruce, între ce-ar fi adevărat și ce-ar fi fals […][40]

Belonging to Christian historians, the variety of different theories about the Ottomans' origins is caused either by the Christian bias against the Ottomans, or by the Christian ignorance of the Ottomans' language and culture. Though, as already mentioned, it is hardly possible to establish if Cantemir was acquainted with Scepticism, the diverse opinions elaborated by Christians about the Ottomans' origins obviously lead to a challenge

to reach the truth which is likely to be reminiscent of one of the essential precepts of the Academic Scepticism, according to which truth cannot be known. By stressing that it is almost impossible to attain truth among the different versions of the Ottomans' origins, despite being careful to defend himself against possible accusations of vanity, Cantemir is likely to aim at bringing out his solution to the crisis of Ottoman history. The solution consists in relying on the sources represented by the history of the Ottomans written by the Ottoman themselves: "But we, by placing higher, as it is rightful and appropriate (let our thought be far from any conceit!), the testimonies of the writers from home rather than those defended by others, from the historians considered by the Turks the worthiest of trust and more carefully we gather the following […]" ("Dar noi, punând mai presus, pe drept și după cum se cuvine (fie departe de vorba noastră vreo trufie!), mărturiile scriitorilor de acasă față de toate cele susținute de alții, de la istoricii socotiți printre Turci a fi mai vrednici de crezare / și mai îngrijiți culegem <următoarele> […]")[41]

In so doing, he certainly emphasizes the superiority of his history that mostly follows from his use of Ottoman historians which, however, he does not regard as totally free from partiality for their Ottoman fellows. Relying on a critical thinking that is careful to distinguish genuine facts from falsehoods, the quest for truth forces him to limit the scope of his work, at the risk of sometimes leaving unsatisfied the curiosity of the public: "But we, who have no other plan in this work than to research truth, have preferred to depict few, but true, things rather than to deceive the Reader through a long series of stories full of barbarisms and atemporal mistakes" ("Dar noi, care nu ne-am propus nimic alta în această lucrare, în afară de cercetarea adevărului, am preferat să înfățișăm puține lucruri, dar adevărate, decât să-l amăgim pe Cititor printr-un lung șir de povești pline de barbarisme și acronisme").[42]

Despite the concessions he makes to the search for truth, he does not always claim to reveal it in its entirety. For example, concerning the disputed death of Suleiman, one of the sons of Yildirim Bayezid, the confusion of the Christian historians about Suleiman's identity contributes to make Cantemir choose the version of the Ottoman historians, which does not overlap truth entirely, but is merely nearer to it: "From which we believe that the Turks' opinion lies closer to the truth" ("De unde credem că părerea Turcilor se află mai aproape de adevăr").[43] Additionally, in the case of another debated issue, related to the stages of the formation of the dominion of Musa, one of Suleiman's brothers, the inconsistency of the

Christian historians about his identity determines Cantemir to prefer the Ottoman historical accounts which, nevertheless, he does not consider more truthful, but only more plausible : "within such an obscurity of history and of chronology, we preferred to the others the narration from the Turkish Annals, as the more clear and more probable" ("într-o asemenea obscuritate și a istoriei și a cronologiei, am preferat celorlalte istorisirea din Annalele Turcești, ca pe cea mai limpede și mai probabilă").[44]

Hence, in some cases, like those that divide the Christian from the Ottoman historians, he obviously accepts versions whose superiority consists in the fact that they approach the truth, without entirely identifying with it. However, in other cases that separate the Christian from the Ottoman history authors, like the one of prince Isfindiarbeg, their conflicting arguments are so inconclusive that they lead him to an uncertainty which he invites the public to reconsider and, possibly, unravel: "Let it remain to the Reader to decide about what to establish in this ambiguity" ("Rămână asupra Cititorului judecata despre ceea ce este de statornicit în această ambiguitate").[45]

Consequently, because of the opaqueness brought about by the contradictory accounts of the same event, he limits himself to a knowledge that only approximates truth. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the obscurity which makes him plainly acknowledge that the truth is out of his reach is sometimes the result of his own weaknesses, like in the case of the name of the youngest son of the Persian shah Ismail, who played a crucial role in the foundation of the Shia Islam : "I have since forgotten his name, because, through the injustice of destiny, having lost the notes that I had very carefully taken down on the basis of the discussions with the most well-learned Turks, but also from other sources, I must make mention only of what my memory provides to me" ("numele <lui> l-am uitat, căci, pierzându-se, prin nedreptatea Sorții, <însemnările> pe care le notasem cu mare grijă de pe urma convorbirilor cu Turcii cei mai învățați, <dar> și din alte monumente, trebuie să pomenesc ce-mi oferă memoria").[46]

As already shown, Cantemir emphatically stresses that he searches for truth, which he especially seeks in the "sources" represented by the Ottoman historians. Despite his method which consists in the collation of several sources and their critical assessment, sometimes, in all honesty, he is forced either to content himself with what seems nearer to truth or more plausible, or even to openly admit that he is unable to attain truth. His approach to the truth, classified into several categories (veracity,

plausibility, uncertainty), seems to be more the consequence of a practical concern than of a theoretical thought.

Coming from more or less different intellectual backgrounds and dealing with more or less recent events from the three great Oriental empires, Cantemir, du Cerceau, the editor of Krusinski and Bernier share the openness to sometimes limit their quest for truth to more modest results, which are related to probability or utter uncertainty. The doubts that they have about the exact version of some of the events they include in their histories are likely to argue for a perception of history which cannot be understood in entirely rational terms. The uncertainty about what really happened in some cases seems to open the way for an understanding of history which does not rely on a linear connection between causes and effects. Though they certainly do not exclude heroes, the histories of Bernier, Krusinski and Cantemir cannot be reduced to a series of great deeds that are born out of the great intentions of exceptional characters. Hence, the histories of the three authors previously mentioned are to an extent shaped by causes which, though apparently unworthy to be taken into account because of their implausibility or insignificance, trigger effects of the biggest consequence.

In his *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol*, Bernier translates the war among the four brothers in the language of the "reason of State", which is intimately connected to rational calculation and which, at the time, was specific to the political thought that aimed at acquiring prestige by following the model of the natural sciences. For example, "It was by reason of State that Sultan Shuja had embraced this last sect [Shia Islam] […]" ("C'était par raison d'État que Sultan Shuja avait embrassé cette dernière secte [le chiisme] […]").[47] Additionally,

> Aurangzeb, who had left his army behind and who moreover knew that this raja was very fond of Shah Jahan, was as it could be well imagined so astonished and feared that this raja could use the occasion for a coup d'État meant to capture him in order to free Shah Jahan from prison, which would have been at that moment very easy to accomplish.

> Aurangzeb, qui avait laissé son armée derrière et qui savait d'ailleurs que ce raja était fort affectionné à Shah Jahan, se trouva assez surpris, comme on peut bien se l'imaginer, dans la crainte que ce raja ne se servît de l'occasion et ne fît un coup d'État, qui était de se saisir de lui pour tirer Shah Jahan de prison, ce qui lui était pour lors très facile.[48]

Related to the Machiavellian intellectual heritage understood as exclusive focus on success, the expressions used by Bernier (reason of State, coup d'État) suggest that, despite probably ignoring the European political culture of their time, the protagonists of the Mughal fratricide war did possess certain political knowledge. Despite the political know-how that was displayed during the conflict among the brothers, the final outcome of their fight was at least partly influenced by causes that seemed trivial. The crucial role played by these apparently negligible causes is likely to be more salient in the case of Dara who, at the beginning of the war, was in a privileged position, because he enjoyed the support of his father, as well as financial and military means superior to those of his three brothers. A dazzling character, he also had some strong shortcomings like the arrogance and the recklessness that certainly contributed to his defeat and death. Unlike Dara, Aurangzeb, the winner of the war, who managed to vanquish his three brothers, succeeded in managing "his secret passion to reign" ("passion secrète qu'il avait de régner").[49] Aurangzeb's capacity to control his passions was part of his political skillfulness thanks to which, ever since the beginning of his ambitious political actions, he was "secretive, cunning and dissimulating to the utmost extent" ("secret, rusé et dissimulé au possible").[50] In spite of the subterfuges that he used in order to impose himself on his brothers, according to Bernier's *Événements particuliers*, which follow the *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol* in the series of the *Voyages*, he was not a "barbarian" ("barbare"), but a "great politician" ("grand politique") and a "great king" ("grand roi"),[51] who managed to triumph over the circumstances of his condition that gave him no other option than to eliminate his rival brothers or to be eliminated by them.

Combined with Dara's weaknesses, Aurangzeb's strengths certainly provide a rational explanation for the result of the war that opposed them. If fortune is said to have been hostile to Dara and favorable to Aurangzeb, this is also because the latter succeeded in turning it to his advantage, while the former was unable to benefit from it. Nonetheless, the fortune also contains an element of arbitrariness, which manifests itself in crucial moments and completely reverses the evolution of the situation. For example, when he is on the verge of winning the key battle against Aurangzeb, Dara is convinced by a traitor to dismount from his elephant. When his soldiers no longer see him, they are totally disheartened by the belief that their leader has been killed and, instead of giving the final blow to their adversaries, they are terrorized and only think of fleeing

Aurangzeb and his troops. Thinking about the episode, Bernier emphasizes the tremendous effect of a cause that, apparently, looks trifling:

> Consequently, for having resisted a quarter of an hour more on an elephant, Aurangzeb finds himself with the crown of Hindoustan on his head, while Dara, for having dismounted the elephant a moment earlier sees himself as if he were thrown from the top to the bottom of the throne and the most unfortunate prince in the world, the fortune having thus enjoyed to make the winning or the loss of a battle and the fate of a great empire depend on a thing of nothingness.

> Il faut qu'Aurangzeb, pour avoir tenu ferme un quart d'heure sur un éléphant, se voie la couronne de l'Hindoustan sur la tête et que Dara, pour en être descendu un moment plus tôt, se voie comme précipité du haut en bas du trône et le plus malheureux prince du monde, la fortune ainsi ayant pris plaisir de faire dépendre le gain ou la perte d'une bataille et la décision d'un grand empire d'une chose de néant.[52]

Obviously, causes apparently so ludicrous that they seem unworthy of being taken into account lead to effects of a scale that can hardly be anticipated. Despite relying on a component that can be rationally explained, the outcome of the life or death battle among the four brothers is also influenced by erratic elements which, because they do not fit into an all- encompassing pattern of a proportion between cause and effect, can be attributed to the unpredictable fate.

While the libertine Bernier accounts for the events he used in order to flesh out his history of the fratricide war that decided the succession to the throne of the Mughal Empire by means of the concept of fortune and the language of the reason of State, the Jesuit Krusinski submits the global explanation of the events that led to the fall of the Safavid Empire to the argument of the divine providence: "Therefore nothing makes us acknowledge more the strong aim of the providence to deprive the house of the Sophy of the crown than the choice and the use that it made of the two usurpers [Afghan leaders] that it placed one after another on the throne" ("Aussi rien ne nous fait-il plus reconnaître dans la providence un dessein marqué de priver de la couronne la maison des Sophy, que le choix et l'usage qu'elle a fait des deux usurpateurs [chefs afghans] qu'elle a mis l'un après l'autre sur le trône").[53] However, the divine providence does not exclude a way of presenting the facts which, implicitly, provides a partially rational explanation for the ruin of the Safavids that in some

cases is increased by the language of the reason of State. Hence, the fall of the great Persian Empire seems predictable because of a series of elements which accumulate and gradually undermine it. The excessive and unnatural influence of the eunuchs over the government, the no longer controlled fierce division into two factions of the different people that make up the empire, the endemic corruption of the administration and of the ruling classes, the weakness of the last shah and his immoderate expenses, all had a role in the transformation of Persia into a pale copy of the strong, well organized and trustworthy State that it used to be in its heyday. One of the most telling signs of the decline of the past efficiency of the Persian government is represented by the dangers of the roads whose famous and almost impeccable safety in the former times had contributed to a flourishing commerce.[54]

The broad overview of the condition of the Persian politics is at times further developed by insights that rely on the vocabulary specific to the reason of State. For example, in the case of the minister, Athemat Doulet, who was the innocent victim of a plot provoked by envy, the final condemnation is presented as unavoidable, though unjust: "Therefore the reason of State required that he was guilty, because he had already been treated as such and because he could become like that" ("La raison d'État voulait donc qu'on le tînt pour criminel, et parce qu'on l'avait déjà traité comme tel, et parce qu'il pouvait le devenir").[55] Hence, based on mere suspicions and careful to avoid losing its face, politics functions according to its own logic, "reason of State", which is divorced from any morality or concern for the individual. Additionally, with respect to the removal from Kandahar of a Mirwais seen as dangerous because of his capacity to sap the Safavid rule, the audacious political actions that are born out of the concern for the possession of power are also referred to: "What Georgi-Kan has just performed was a coup d'État, as it has been more than enough justified by the event" ("C'était un coup d'État, comme l'évènement ne l'a que trop justifié, que celui que venait de faire Georgi-Kan").[56] The intrigues against Luft Ali Kan, the gifted Persian military ruler who successfully fought against the Afghans, lead to a conclusion which highlights the opposition between the individual good of the perpetrators and the good of the State: "although they could not destroy him without overturning at the same time the future hopes of the reconquest of Kandahar and of the pacification of this revolted frontier, the thought of their private interest imposed itself on the most important interest of the State" ("quoiqu'ils ne pussent le ruiner sans renverser en même temps les espérances prochaines

de la réduction de Kandahar et de la pacification de cette frontière révoltée, la considération de leur intérêt particulier l'emporta sur l'intérêt le plus important de l'État").[57]

The language specific to the reason of State (reason of State, coup d'État, interest of State) emphasizes that the Persian politics was, on many occasions, based on calculations that did not always consolidate the State, but sometimes also weakened it. Nonetheless, beyond the elements that contribute to a certain rational understanding of it, the disastrous fall of Ispahan, at least as provoked by the attacks of the Afghans, is still partly determined by an arbitrary element. Though they certainly were a potentially dangerous people, who were a constant danger to their neighbors, the Afghans could have hardly been seen as a serious threat to the central Persian power for a sum of reasons: their situation in a distant and backward frontier of the empire, their relatively small number of soldiers, their ignorance of the siege warfare necessary for occupying Ispahan and, eventually, their lack of interest in the conquest of the Persian Empire caused by their awareness of their limited capacities. Rather than terrifying, the first major attack of Ispahan by the Afghans looked actually more like the parody of a real battle: "Concerning the general attack, if it is worthy of this name, it lasted for three hours and served as an amusement show for the inhabitants of the town itself against which it pretended to be directed […]" ("À l'égard de l'attaque générale, si pourtant elle mérite ce nom, elle dura six heures, et servit d'un spectacle d'amusement aux habitants de la ville même qu'on prétendait attaquer […]").[58] Hence, the Afghans behave more like burlesque characters than like heroic conquerors. Throughout the duration of their siege of Ispahan, their victory seemed to be far from certain. The fact that, eventually, Ispahan surrendered to them, was as surprising for the Afghans as it was for the rest of the world.[59]

Sapped by the venality and the incapacity of its political elites, the Persian Empire resembled a giant with feet of clay. Nevertheless, the fact that it was conquered by the apparently insignificant Afghans is likely an argument for the fact that petty causes can bring about immeasurable effects. Though, to a great extent, it can be understood in rational terms, the history narrated by Krusinski is also influenced by an element of unpredictability, which can be related to the divine providence. The logical connections between the causes and the effects that give substance to Krusinski's history cannot entirely eliminate the arbitrariness that is likely to derive from the global impact of the divine providence on the world.

As far as he is concerned, Cantemir highlights time and again the unexpected twists of fate, termed "Fortuna", which affected the lives and careers of the Ottoman political elites. Nonetheless, until the battle of Vienna, these twists of fate seemed to influence more the existence of individuals than that of the empire itself. As a matter of fact, the unexpected situation changes seemed to be part of the instability which, though at the core of the Ottoman political life, was not necessarily a threat to the empire itself. The moral corruption and the atmosphere of generalized suspicion were at the origin of political practices which were based on treachery and the annihilation of rivals. However, it is worth mentioning that the elimination of political adversaries did not necessarily entail a selection of officials which systematically excluded the worthiest ones in order to promote those whose only attribute was immorality.

According to Cantemir, the battle of Vienna, the capital event which was at the origin of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, was decided by an "'ex machina'" strategy to which the "Great Judge of luck" ("Marele Judecător al norocului")[60] resorted because he was merciful to the Christians. Significantly attributed to the divine providence and not to "Fortuna", as in many other cases of lesser importance, the unexpected cause that provoked the dramatic defeat of the Ottomans was represented by the "foolish plans" ("planuri prostești")[61] which took hold of the great vizier, Cara Mustafa Pasha. By no means an incompetent military leader, since he possessed both wisdom and experience, he nevertheless fell victim to his ambition and extreme vanity. In so doing, he developed "such monstrous thoughts" ("gânduri atât de monstruoase")[62] that he believed himself able to use the battle of Vienna in order to create another Muslim empire in Europe, comparable to the one in Asia, which he aimed to rule as a sultan. The vizier's recklessness caused a disaster for the Ottoman troops, which sparked a series of other major defeats that considerably weakened the Ottoman Empire and provoked its final decay.

Whether attributed to "Fortuna," "fortune", or divine providence, the arbitrary element which appears in key places of the histories by Bernier, Krusinski and Cantemir overthrows a sequence of events that seemed initially predictable. Likely to result from a conception of history that accepts the existence of different levels of uncertainty, the unexpected aspect that completely changes the face of history is likely to open the way for a writing of history which is not exclusively built around the figure of morally exceptional political actors and their constantly efficient actions.

NOTES

[1]   My study is highly indebted to the NEC seminar devoted to my research project. Moreover, my analysis of Cantemir strongly benefits from a discussion with Dr. Emanuela Timotin and Dr. Ovidiu Olar, who generously accepted to share with me their knowledge of the Moldavian prince.

[2]   La Mothe Le Vayer, *Du Peu de certitude qu'il y a dans l'histoire*, *Œuvres*, V/II, Dresden, Michel Groell, 1756-1759, 444.
      N. B. All the translations from French and Romanian into English are mine. In the original French version I have modernized the orthography.

[3]   Peter Burke, "History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates," in J. Rabasa, M. Sato, E. Tortarolo, D. Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3 (1400-1800), Oxford University Press, 2012, 261-281.

[4]   See, for example, Florence Wickelgren, *La Mothe Le Vayer. Sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris, Droz, 1934, 8-16.

[5]   See, for example, Gérard Ferreyrolles, "Introduction générale," in Gérard Ferreyrolles (ed.) with the collaboration of Fr. Charbonneau, M.-A. de Langenhagen, B. Guion, A. Mantero, Ch. Meurillon et H. Michon, *Traités sur l'histoire (1638-1677). La Mothe Le Vayer, Le Moyne, Saint-Réal, Rapin*, Paris, Champion, 2013, 38-39.

[6]   Peter Burke, "History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates," 265.

[7]   See, for example, Frédéric Tinguely, "Introduction," in *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole. Les Voyages de François Bernier*, ed. by Fr. Tinguely, Paris, Chandeigne, 2008, 18-23 and Faith Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal. François Bernier, Marguerite de La Sablière, and Enlightening Conversations in Seventeenth-Century France*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2018, 40-48.

[8]   Rudi Matthee, "Introduction" to *an Eyewitness Account of the Fall of the Safavid Dinasty*, by Judas Thaddeus Krusiński, London, New York, Tauris, 2018, x-xi.

[9]   See, for example, Virgil Cândea, "Prefața traducerii românești," in Dimitrie Cantemir, *Istoria Creșterilor și a Descreșterilor Curții Othman[n]ice sau Aliothman[n]ice*, traducere românească și indice de Dan Slușanschi, 2nd ed., Paideia, București, 2020, 7-8.

[10] Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal*, 40-48; Matthee, Introduction to *an Eyewitness Account of the Fall of the Safavid Dinasty*, xii; Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Dimitrie Cantemir's *Ottoman History* and its Reception in England," in *History and the Enlightenment*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2010, 54-70.

[11] Diogo Ramada Curto, "European Historiography of the East," in Daniel Woolf (ed.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, 549.

[12] See, for example, Rudi Matthee, "The Imaginary Realm: Europe's Enlightenment Image of Early Modern Iran," *Comparative Studies of South*

  Asia, Africa and Middle East, vol. 30, nᵒ 3, 2010, 449-462 and "Savafid Iran through the Eyes of European Travellers," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. 23, nᵒ 1-2, spring-summer 2012, 10-24.

13 Michel Delon (ed.), *Dictionnaire européen des Lumières*, entry "Orient," Paris, PUF, 807-808.

14 Gérard Ferreyrolles, "Introduction," 41.

15 My analyses of Bernier are partly based on my article "*L'Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol* de Bernier au carrefour de la vraisemblance et de la tragédie indienne", in Sylvie Requemora-Gros, Mathilde Bedel, Mathilde Morinet (eds.), Les Actes de la Journée d'étude «Le Voyage en Inde à l'Âge classique» (forthcoming in 2022).

16 Bernier, *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol*, *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole*, 45.

17 Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal,* 54.

18 Bernier, *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol*, 121.

19 Ibid., 110.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 130.

22 Ibid., 113

23 Ibid.

24 See, for example, Marc Fumaroli, "Historiographie et épistémologie à l'époque classique", in Gilbert Gadoffre (ed.), *Certitudes et incertitudes de l'histoire*, Paris, PUF, 1987, p. 87-104 and Carlo Borghero, *La Certezza e la storia. Cartesianismo, pirronismo e conoscenza storica*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1983, 46-57.

25 Tinguely, "Introduction," 9-11.

26 Matthee, Introduction to *an Eyewitness Account of the Fall of the Safavid Dinasty*, viii-x.

27 Judas Thaddeus Krusinski, *Histoire de la dernière révolution de Perse*, vol. I, La Haye, Gosse et Neaulme, 1728, xiv-xvii.

28 Ibid., xiii-xiv.

29 Ibid., x.

30 Ibid., x-xi.

31 Ibid., xii-xiii.

32 Ibid., xii.

33 Ibid., xx.

34 Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

35 Fumaroli, "Historiographie et épistémologie à l'époque classique," 92-93.

36 Trevor-Roper, "Dimitrie Cantemir's *Ottoman History* and its Reception in England," 54-70.

37   Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters. Islam and the European Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018, 136-166.

38   See, for example, Ştefan Lemny, *Cantemireştii. Aventura europeană a unei familii princiare din secolul al XVIII-lea*, 2nd ed., prefață de Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, traducere de Magda Jeanrenaud, Polirom, 2013, 52-96.

39   Dimitrie Cantemir, *Istoria Creșterilor și a Descreșterilor Curții Othman[n] ice sau Aliothman[n]ice*, 13.

40   Ibid., 49.

41   Ibid.

42   Ibid., 186.

43   Ibid., 208.

44   Ibid., 207.

45   Ibid., 208.

46   Ibid., 247.

47   Bernier, *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol*, 48.

48   Ibid., 100.

49   Ibid., 91.

50   Ibid., 48.

51   Bernier, *Événements particuliers, Un libertin dans L'Inde moghole*, p. 196.

52   Bernier, *Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol*, 86.

53   Krusinski, *Histoire de la dernière révolution de Perse*, vol. II, 321.

54   Ibid., vol. I, 95-106.

55   Ibid., 348.

56   Ibid., 177.

57   Ibid., 302.

58   Ibid., vol. II, 113.

59   Ibid., vol. I, 1-2.

60   Cantemir, *Istoria Creșterilor și a Descreșterilor Curții Othman[n]ice sau Aliothman[n]ice*, 346.

60   Ibid.

61   Ibid.

Bibliography

Primary sources

BERNIER Fr., *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole. Les Voyages de François Bernier*, ed. by Frédéric Tinguely, Chandeigne, Paris, 2008.

DIMITRIE, C., *Istoria Creșterilor și a Descreșterilor Curții Othman[n]ice sau Aliothman[n]ice*, 2nd ed., prefața traducerii românești de acad. Virgil Cândea, traducere românească și indice de Dan Slușanschi, Paideia, București, 2020.

KRUSINSKI, J. T., *Histoire de la dernière révolution de Perse*, Gosse et Neaulme, La Haye, 1728.

Secondary sources

BEASLEY, F., *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal. François Bernier, Marguerite de La Sablière, and Enlightening Conversations in Seventeenth-Century France*, University of Toronto Press, 2018.

BEVILACQUA, A., *The Republic of Arabic Letters. Islam and the European Enlightenment*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2018.

BORGHERO, C., *La Certezza e la storia. Cartesianismo, pirronismo e conoscenza storica*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1983.

BURKE, P., "History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates", in J. Rabasa, M. Sato, E. Tortarolo, D. Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3 (1400-1800), Oxford University Press, 2012, 261-281.

CÂNDEA, V., "Prefața traducerii românești", in Dimitrie Cantemir, *Istoria Creșterilor și a Descreșterilor Curții Othman[n]ice sau Aliothman[n] ice*, traducere românească și indice de Dan Slușanschi, 2nd ed., Paideia, București, 2020.

DELON, M., *Dictionnaire européen des Lumières*, entry "Orient", PUF, Paris, 2007.

FERREYROLLES, G., "Introduction générale", in Gérard Ferreyrolles (ed.) with the collaboration of Fr. Charbonneau, M.-A. de Langenhagen, B. Guion, A. Mantero, Ch. Meurillon et H. Michon, *Traités sur l'histoire (1638-1677). La Mothe Le Vayer, Le Moyne, Saint-Réal, Rapin*, Champion, Paris, 2013.

FUMAROLI, M., "Historiographie et épistémologie à l'époque classique", in Gilbert Gadoffre (ed.), *Certitudes et incertitudes de l'histoire*, PUF, Paris, 1987, 87-104.

LEMNY, Ş., *Cantemireștii. Aventura europeană a unei familii princiare din secolul al XVIII-lea*, 2nd ed., prefață de Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, traducere de Magda Jeanrenaud, Polirom, Iași, 2013.

MANEA, I., "*L'Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol* de Bernier au carrefour de la vraisemblance et de la 'tragédie indienne'", in Sylvie Requemora-Gros, Mathilde Bedel, Mathilde Morinet (eds.), Les Actes de la Journée d'étude «Le Voyage en Inde à l'Âge classique» (forthcoming in 2022).

MATTHEE, R., Introduction to *An Eyewitness Account of the Fall of the Safavid Dinasty*, by Judas Thaddeus Krusiński, London, New York, 2018.

MATTHEE, R., "Savafid Iran through the Eyes of European Travellers", *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. 23, nº 1-2, spring-summer 2012, 10-24.

MATTHEE, R., "The Imaginary Realm: Europe's Enlightenment Image of Early Modern Iran", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, vol. 30, nº 3, 2010, 449-462.

RAMADA CURTO, D., "European Historiography of the East", in J. Rabasa, M. Sato, E. Tortarolo, D. Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3 (1400-1800), Oxford University Press, 2012, 536-555.

TREVOR-ROPER, H., "Dimitrie Cantemir's *Ottoman History* and its Reception in England", in *History and the Enlightenment*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2010, 54-70.

WICKELGREN, F., *La Mothe Le Vayer. Sa vie et son oeuvre*, Droz, Paris, 1934.

ANCUȚA MORTU

Born in 1987, in Alexandria, Romania

Ph.D. in Aesthetics, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (CRAL, CNRS-EHESS, Paris) – 2015
Thesis: *De la cognition esthétique à l'esthétique cognitive. Une étude généalogique*

Researcher, Department of Art History, Masaryk University

Fellowships and grants
Global Humanities Junior Research Fellow, Freie Universität Berlin within the Thematic Network *Principles of Cultural Dynamics* (2016)
Research Fellow, ICUB Fellowship for Young Researchers, Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB) – 2019

Participation to international conferences in Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and UK

Research papers in philosophical aesthetics and art theory

THE COGNITIVE STRUCTURE OF ART APPRECIATION: A STUDY ON NORTHWEST COAST ART

Abstract

This paper addresses the aesthetic appreciation of indigenous creative practices, with a focus on the mental processes at play in such acts of appreciation. My hypothesis is that to develop an understanding of human cognition through art, it might be useful to look at art more expansively, by considering creative practices that are not usually within the purview of Western philosophical systems. More specifically, I will draw on examples from indigenous societies of the Pacific Northwest that encompass everything from utilitarian objects to ritual artefacts used in ceremonial circumstances and dance performances etc. to argue that aesthetic appreciation is shaped by a shared cognitive repertoire[1] of processes and capacities.

Keywords: art appreciation, indigenous aesthetics, aesthetic cognition, Northwest Coast art

1. Introduction

This paper aims to provide a framework for studying the cognitive structure of art appreciation, i.e., mechanisms and mental processes that shape our encounters with art and with stimuli of potential aesthetic interest, while focusing on indigenous creative practices from the cultural area of Northwest Coast. I argue that to develop an understanding of human cognition through art, it might be useful to look at art more expansively, by considering practices that are not usually within the purview of Western philosophical systems. Ultimately, the paper aims to challenge normative questions of what constitutes art and aesthetic appreciation.

In seeking an alternative to metaphysical systems that usually inform discussions about art and aesthetic appreciation, I begin by setting the discussion within a natural scientific framework, i.e., a framework which

encompasses types of inquiry that are based on explanations derived from natural science such as cognitive anthropology and cognitive psychology. I then provide a brief survey of the artistic expression of the indigenous communities from the Pacific Northwest, mostly from the Canadian province of British Columbia, and look at concepts of spirituality in these art practices. Finally, I give some insight into how a certain type of aesthetic receptiveness of the Northwest Coast art gradually came about and draw some theoretical consequences with respect to the evolution of aesthetic traditions.

2. Converging Methodologies: Cognitive Anthropology and Indigenous Art Studies

My starting hypothesis is that the study of indigenous creative practices may serve to re-conceptualize and refine the cognitive concepts that could accommodate the distinctiveness of aesthetic appreciation, if there is such distinctiveness of aesthetic response. What principles underlie indigenous appreciative practices and, more specifically, what principles of cognition may derive from these practices? In order to find elements of response to this question, it might be useful to draw on natural scientific areas of inquiry, such as cognitive anthropology. If the question of how anthropology relates to the study of art[2] is well documented, less attention has been paid to the ways in which cognitive anthropology might inform aesthetic appreciative response.

At a subpersonal, computational level, which is less "cognitively blind",[3] as some proponents of evolutionary theory would have it, cognitive anthropology is focused on culturally shared intuitive inference systems that act as invariant[4] base modules of human cognition and are deemed to be responsible for capacities

> such as detecting people's line of gaze, assessing people's attractiveness, parsing sentences, telling friends from enemies, detecting the presence of pathogens, sorting animals into species and families, creating three-dimensional visual scenes, engaging in cooperative action, predicting the trajectory of solid objects, detecting social groups in our community, creating emotional bonds to one's offspring, understanding narratives, figuring out people's stable personality traits, estimating when violence is appropriate or counterproductive, thinking about absent people, learning

what foods are safe, inferring dominance from social interactions—and many, many more.[5]

At a personal level, cognitive anthropology studies the structure of collective representations shared within communities which are often radically different from the ones we know. Some examples of shared representations include particular mental constructs, concepts referring to physical properties – this is where native understandings of and interaction with the physical world are highly relevant, such as the idea of transformation from one realm of creation to another and of personification of inanimate objects, substantiated, for instance, by some transformation masks worn during Northwest Coast winter ceremonies –, counterintuitive physical properties attributed to certain persons or creatures – e.g. a shaman, Thunderbird –, particular contents or recurrent features in mental representations[6] – e. g. the presence of spiritual agencies and ancestors in small-scale societies – the susceptibility of these features of being passed on, distributed and disseminated (e.g., common elements of tales and myths[7]), of serving as anchors for particular art forms, concepts related to the situatedness[8] of cognition and its adaptability to contexts etc. Indigenous capabilities to create and appreciate art may also be included here.

Both subpersonal and personal structures can count as "cognitive attractors",[9] or recurrent features in mental representations that people are likely to entertain given their cognitive makeup and the place they occupy in a group or society.

One way to get a sense of the variety of cognitive attractors is through what the anthropologist Pascal Boyer calls "an estrangement procedure",[10] for instance by adopting an evolutionary perspective or by relating to different systems of reference that go against the grain of the ones we are used to. An attempt at multi-perspectivism is exemplified, for instance, by the temporary anthropological exhibition titled "Qu'est-ce qu'un corps", held in 2006 at the newly opened Musée du Quai Branly, in Paris. Building a dialogue around the collections of art from Africa, Oceania, Europe and the Americas, the exhibition confronted indigenous viewpoints with European conceptions of the body,[11] giving equal weight to conceptions stressing the psychophysiological properties of the body, to its subjective interiority, or, on the contrary, to its relational[12] character, when it is defined through the way it is perceived. What resulted was a more heightened awareness of the unsteady divide between mind and

body across communities, as well as the flexibility of the conception of what it is like to be human.

From the outset, the aesthetic recategorization of the indigenous artefacts in the collection of the Musée du Quai Branly, whose functions were deeply embedded in everyday life, has been subject to controversy. In an attempt to strengthen out the problem of aesthetic homogenization, the exhibition "Qu'est-ce qu'un corps?" aimed at reversing the hierarchy between indigenous conceptions of the body and western ones,[13] proposing instead an anthropologic, des-aestheticized[14] viewpoint, which emphasized, on the one hand, the anthropological relevance of western objects, and, on the other, the functional heterogeneity of non-western artefacts.[15] The stress was less on affording a type of experience or affective responsiveness than on conveying knowledge of a wide range of systems of beliefs.

It is important to mention that the objection form aesthetic irreducibility does not apply evenly to all forms of indigenous art since not all conceptions of aesthetics are removed from instrumental function. Northwest Coast art, for instance, if it has a utilitarian purpose, demanding to be used, it does not dismiss as reductive all aesthetic concern, as we can see in the following passage: "The functions of art in Northwest Coast societies are really not so different from those in Western art traditions. Art has both an aesthetic component and a «practical» component, with the emphasis shifting from one to the other in response to the purpose to which it is put. It can bring joy, stir emotions, glorify the past, honor the present, foster pride, evoke spiritual power, and promote knowledge. Art functioned and continues to function in all these ways on the Northwest Coast".[16]

Furthermore, an important cognitive attractor is, according to Boyer, the representation of the distinction between nature and culture. If we look at how the world order falls into place in Native creative practices of the Northwest Coast, we will see a correlation of these practices with the ontology of totemism,[17] which stresses, following Philippe Descola's definition, the continuity between humans and animal species, both on the axes of physicality and interiority. Within Native communities the aesthetic is understood in relation to conceptions of nature, operating in turn in a conceptual framework tied to the mythological past.[18] It would be interesting to see what spirit representations of Native appreciative communities inflected by such conceptions of nature have to contribute to our understanding of cognitive capacities that we all have in common. A possible answer to the question of why indigenous art practices are

significant for cognitive empirical studies is that they might bring forth new cognitive attractors, which remain understudied to this day.

The background assumption that ontological presuppositions are reflected in indigenous artistic expression is equally reflected in museum representations of indigenous artefacts. Conspicuously, the newly renovated Musée de l'Homme in Paris puts on display a cross-cultural mixture of pieces arranged according to a system of classification which illustrates Descola's ontologies of animism, totemism, analogism and naturalism. Another example which reinforces this assumption is the anthropological temporary exhibition *La Fabrique des Images*, hosted yet again by the Musée du Quai Branly in 2010-2011 and curated by the same Philippe Descola.

So much for the relation between cognitive anthropology and the appreciation of indigenous creative practices. At the other end of the naturalistic spectrum, indigenous studies gain prominence and shape contemporary debates on postcolonialism. The term "Indigenous peoples" appears in the 1970s,[19] with the growing consciousness of a native identity, when indigenous communities start asserting and claiming humanity and self-determination,[20] thus mounting a form of resistance to colonial authority; the American Indian Movement (i.e., a militant civil rights organization) founded in 1968 is indicative in this respect.

The idea of Northwest Coast Native art emerges in such a heavy context of colonization and within a scientific paradigm of positivism which has been deeply problematic;[21] not all constructs of anthropology afforded an egalitarian and non-appropriative perspective of indigenous practices, e.g.: a particular type of late nineteenth-century anthropology fostering the idea of stages of human evolution and progress was doomed to fail, since it associated art to a racial status.[22] Many harmful policies were legitimated by this type of research; many fields of knowledge, positivistic in flavor, were subjugating, even dehumanizing indigenous peoples.[23] "Have you come to measure my head?".[24] this is a recurring, arresting question that a famous contemporary art collector had to answer upon his encounter with indigenous communities. The growing interest in non-Western societies raises the question of problematizing Eurocentric frames of reference and the appropriateness of claiming ownership over indigenous ways of knowing, belief systems, creative practices, rituals etc. According to Linda Smith, there are a number of

critical questions that communities and indigenous activists often ask, in a variety of ways: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? […] These questions are simply part of a larger set of judgements on criteria that a researcher cannot prepare for, such as: Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything?[25]

The remaining of this paper will be devoted to finding a balance between frames of reference that, although antagonistic at first sight, might prove to be complementary.

3. Northwest Coast Art Practices and Indigenous Spirituality

This section will provide a brief survey of Northwest Coast art with an emphasis on the spirituality at play in indigenous practices. My hypothesis is that a better understanding of non-western belief systems may serve to unpack the prevailing cognitive assumptions in the study of art appreciation. Here is Ki-ke-in, an "historian, poet and creator of many things", on the importance of having a sense of the traditional belief system that informs native creative practices:

In our traditional belief system, the known universe is divided into four realms: the under-sea world, the on-the-land world, the in-the sky-world, and the world beyond-the -horizon. Each of these realms is overseen by a great and powerful ch'ihaa or spirit. These four Great Spirit Chiefs affect every aspect of every event in our experience at every moment.[26]

The Northwest Coast cosmology comprises therefore several superimposed realms such as the sky world, the undersea world, land world and spirit world, each inhabited by real and mythic creatures.[27] The mythological repertoire of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast includes, for instance, thunderbird, raven, killer-whale, sea-otter, beaver, frog, grizzly bear or bear mother etc.

The transition between realms is constantly bridged by several creatures; thus, the realms are in constant interaction. Relations with the

non-human world are constantly questioned; human and natural worlds are part of an interrelated universe.[28]

Native art affirms the endurance of Indigenous spirituality[29] in spite of numerous attempts to erase it.[30] To give just an example, the exhibition *Sacred Circles: The Indianness of North American Indian Art*,[31] was meant to testify precisely to the endurance of the system of beliefs of the Indian. Totem poles, masks, animal crests, shaman's paraphernalia etc. are famously known for serving the purpose of reclaiming spirituality and making "the world of supernatural beings visible and present. A masked figure in a Kwakiutl winter dance did not simply symbolize a spirit creature, in a sense it proved that the spirit was actually present".[32] Spirit representations to which such objects give a body, whether guardian spirits lured into alliances or cannibal spirits, are closely tied to ancestor cults and ceremonies.[33] Shamanic objects in particular, such as soul catchers, amulets, speaker's staffs, masks and maskettes, oystercatcher rattles are thought to be embodying the supernatural experience.[34] For instance, a ceremony of soul recovery is described by an early explorer in the following terms:

> Barbeau (1958) describes soul catchers as "one of the most potent charms in a medicine bag". Shamans, who wore them suspended from their necks, used them to recover souls that had left a patient's body and were thus causing illness. With the aid of chanting and trances, a shaman could locate a soul, induce it to enter the container, hold it there by inserting the cedar bark plugs, and finally return it to the host to effect a cure. Soul catchers could also be used for blowing out or sucking away disease and evil. They served other purposes as well. Miller, for example, states that a shaman's spirit helpers occupied the soul catcher's center.[35]

Furthermore, shaman's paraphernalia within Northwest Coast art is often described in terms of "an overpowering beauty",[36] many objects are thought to be of "high aesthetic quality".[37] Nonetheless, their main function is that of giving a body to spiritual agencies:

> Because its purpose is to substantiate a relationship with the supernatural, the art stands somewhat apart from the art made for crest display for chiefs and their families. Where the ceremonial equipment and masks used by secret societies is dramatic, and the art made for prestige display is decorative and often spectacular, the material used by the shaman has

more of a magical and surrealistic quality to it, serving as it does to give form to an invisible world of spirits and supernatural beliefs.[38]

Thus, what is of primary importance is rather the efficacy and impact of performances, taken as a whole. Moreover, the interaction with spiritual agencies is more of a practical commerce rather than a religious commitment[39] that benefits the individual or the local community. The original context in which these performances unfolded with their chants and dances is of course no longer available to contemporary audiences:

> though it is possible to admire these objects simply as the extraordinary creations they most certainly are, each must also be regarded as part of a more complex totality that combines an ancient belief system with conspicuous display, theatre, and now lost stories of individual encounters with the world of the supernatural. Now that these fine works are no longer in ritual use or the property of their once powerful masters, we must rely on the art itself to convey something of this totality to us.[40]

We have seen with Boyer that what counts initially as inconsistent, or irrational can ultimately be explained in terms of natural processes. Cognitive attractors such as representations of spirits with which shamans are deemed to interact preserve a number of properties of human-like agents[41] (having minds, perceiving, thinking, feeling etc.), their counterintuitive properties being a reflexive violation of them, which does nothing more than reinforce ordinary cognitive assumptions and background intuitive expectations: "supernatural concepts combine salient violations and implicit confirmation of what are called intuitive ontologies, that is, sets of expectations that we entertain about large domains of reality, such as animate beings, persons, living things, man-made objects, natural things".[42] In this light, the reason why some representations seem to perdure in a community or across groups is that they capitalize on the capacity of shared cognitive systems to inflect experience in a particular direction. Thus, the capacity to entertain representations of mythical creatures or spirits can be integrated as being a part of the human condition: "whether we study the shamanic practices of the Huichol of Mexico, the Eskimos of the Arctic, the Aborigines of Australia, the peoples of Northern Siberia, or the Indians of Northwest Coast (to mention only a few), certain similar basic elements and variations on them will always be found".[43] Here's yet another passage that stresses the robustness of spirit representations as

cognitive attractors: "a unifying factor in Northwest Coast Indian culture is the basic concept of the universe and the relationship with the supernatural as expressed in all the arts. The concept of an individual guardian spirit is found in many American Indian societies, but each group has developed it in a specific local manner."[44] The way explicit violations are codified in creative practices might thus serve to reveal something about invariants of human cognition.

The explicit violations of intuitive ontologies that can be encountered in indigenous creative practices have the function to trigger attention and reinforce salience and memorability[45] of the experience. As Ralph T. Coe remarks, although there isn't a standardized indigenous aesthetics,

> traditional artists depend on their own formula for supernatural recall, based on a highly regularized symbolic design vocabulary made up from the recreation of animal parts – eyes, ears, paws, knee joints, tails, fins, nostrils – and body paint motifs. Each of these existed as a means of psychic recall. This regard for the all-pervading animal past, should, I think, be stressed. The invention of one's own past, especially for purposes of asserting social distinction lineage identification, is an undeniably sophisticated act. The Northwest Coast Indian, who was not primitive, created a past, and a style to go with it, that was quite extraordinary.[46]

The exhibition *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985,*[47] exemplifies the enduring legacy of the past in contemporary Indian art, an art that, while keeping alive the conventions of tradition, aims at creative renewal and change.[48] A question that arises is that of knowing what such "supernatural recall" and retrieval may amount to for western audiences, coming from a different culture with different mental models. The cognitive psychologist Frederic Bartlett[49] addressed precisely this question in a study on the memorability of a Native American folk tale, convincingly proving the great extent to which expectations shape recall and help reconstruct an experience according to a worldview to which one has been previously exposed. As a possible consequence, acknowledging that different audiences have different strategies for classifying and structuring information may overcome perceptualist biases that overstate the central role of sense experience in aesthetic appreciation.

There are further psychological elements in the attempt at understanding Northwest Coast art; we can mention here psychological questions regarding individual creativity and aesthetic appreciation or the

capacity that art has to be illustrative of the psychology of native people. Franz Boas, for instance, famously held that there is a well-developed aesthetic sense in the mind of the native artist, disclaiming the commonly held view of the Indian's "untutored mind" or primitive mentality.[50] Boas dismissed evolutionist schemes, both with respect to cognition and art; he endorsed the idea of a "psychic unity of mankind", which entails that there are invariants in cognition, and similarity of mental processes in all peoples. Nonetheless, in his early studies on the origin and development of the history of artistic forms and mythologies of the North Pacific Coast Indians, he did give equal emphasis to dissemination of customs favored by historical factors and cultural borrowings, as opposed to relying exclusively on an explanation in terms of psychical causes and propensities of the human mind.[51] He thus sought to avoid an essentialism about particular cultural groups,[52] which generally goes hand in hand with racial assumptions. A definition of essentialism goes as follows:

> people are essentialists about a social category when they assume that a) all members share some special quality that is exclusive to the category and need not be defined, b) possession of that special quality is a matter of biological descent, not historical accident or acquisition, and c) that special quality is what makes them behave in particular ways. […] Why is the ideology of essential natural differences so widespread and so compelling? Perhaps it is because our minds somehow mistake human groups for species; using membership to a species to override perceptual appearances.[53]

Such misconstructions and essentialisms were imputed, for instance, to several institutions which chose to display indigenous artefacts. For instance, according to Jean-Marie Schaeffer, the Musée du Quai Branly was considered to be essentializing[54] pre-literate societies and their artistic expression; the works gathered in the museum collection were assumed to share a common essence, that of being "primitive art", subject to the leveling discourse of aesthetic unification. Where the aesthetic attitude was understood as an othering strategy.

There is, nonetheless, aestheticization without essentializing. In comparing the project of the Musée du Quai Branly with the project of the National Museum of the American Indian[55] (a museum in which native communities are actively involved), Jean-Marie Schaeffer observes that the aesthetic appreciation fostered through museography does not

necessarily have to be illegitimate or suspicious if we consider that aesthetic concerns are not unknown to indigenous peoples. A discourse of aesthetic legitimation is held within several Native communities; in many cases, a claim to the aesthetic status of artefacts and their self-expressive character[56] goes hand in hand with a claim to recognition of Indian identity. Here's a telling quote that emphasizes this point: "every minor feature of Northwest Coast art style contributes to one basic quality: its strength and self-assertive vitality… few cultures have so consistently developed these traits while combining them with a marked sensitivity to nuances of form and the highest standards of craftsmanship.".[57] Moreover, there is an appreciative indigenous community acknowledging and highly regarding skilled work:

> It has been popular in recent years to describe Native American languages as "having no word for art", implying that art in those societies was not frivolous and decorative, but was truly functional. One could take that idea to mean that Native American art had no aesthetic component, or at least that aesthetics were of subordinate value. The ideas of skill, craftsmanship, and beauty are all capable of expression in Northwest Coast (indeed in all Native American) languages, and there is, just as there is in English, "a word for art". Clearly, the sophisticated canons could not have developed without an appreciation of the aesthetic component. Nor would renowned artists as far removed from one another in time and distance as the early nineteenth century Tlingit master Kajis'du.axtc and the twentieth-century Kwakwaka'wawk artist Willie Seaweed have been commissioned by chiefs from distant villages to produce the masks and poles representing their treasured heritages.[58]

The boundary between the aesthetic and the functional is no longer operative here given that both uses appear to be involved in appreciating these practices.

A different divide, in terms of "culture areas" (i.e., areas of distinctive culture in distinctive environments), among which we can find the Northwest Coast, was meant to avoid the dangers of essentialization. The notion of culture area, as the definition goes, serves a classification of peoples based on culture or culture traits, norms and rules embedded in behavior and material products, without judgment about intellect or morals.[59] In what follows I will provide a brief survey of artistic expressions that are prevalent on the Northwest Coast.

To start with, totem poles are one of the most prominent forms of indigenous artistic expression. Totem poles are wooden pillars carved from red cedar logs; they represent real and mythic beings, usually in animal form, i.e., beings from mythical times "who became, or were encountered by, the ancestors of a group that later took them as crests".[60] Generally, totem poles reveal stories about human's contact with the spirit world and other supernatural encounters,[61] stories about family origins and acquisition of power etc. They can thus indicate membership group, assert historic lineage and in this case, they are called crests, being associated to clan legends, e.g., the Raven clan, or the Thunderbird clan. They can be erected in honor of deceased chiefs, usually at potlatches, and in this case, they are called memorial poles, participating in acts of tribal recollection; totem poles can thus also be considered as mnemonic devices serving the purpose of honoring ancestors.[62]

Moreover, the act of raising a pole during public events – usually at potlatches – is more significant than the poles themselves, many poles, once raised, are allowed to decay.[63]

Some poles are associated with origin stories, such as Halibut, a totem pole that can be seen in the Great Hall of the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver; Halibut is more specifically related to a creation story of transformation and change in which he is shedding his tail and fins and skin and becomes the first man.[64]

Another example is Bill Reid (Haida)'s monumental sculpture *Raven and the first Men*, which can also be seen at the Museum of Anthropology. The Haida sculpture carves up an origin story[65] of creation. Along the same lines, further origin stories that we can mention here are "Raven Steals the Sun", "Raven Steals the Moon", with Raven transforming the world into what it has become today. The former tells the origin of daylight and is beautifully illustrated by Box of Daylight Raven Hat-Lkaayaak Yeil S'aaxw, Tlingit, 1850, SAM 91. 1. 124, representing "the grandson of Naas Shagi Yeil reassuming raven form, wearing the sun as a headdress and perched upon his grandfather's box, from which the sun, moon, and stars have just been released.".[66] In Native mythology, there are numerous tales with Raven as the leading character. According to Boas's studies, Raven tales are a tradition found among the Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian;[67] the tales are representative of a system of beliefs that was animistic rather than being focused on gods: "all living things and the celestial bodies were believed to have indwelling spirits or souls. These had to be respectfully addressed by human beings who needed to win their active help".[68]

Furthermore, Raven is also associated with utilitarian objects that serve a spiritual purpose, such as raven rattles, used more specifically to honor past chiefs.

An important indigenous concept of spirituality is that of transformation, which, along other mythological elements, can be found among art objects from the Pacific Basin[69] cultures. This concept is illustrated for instance by transformation puppets used in shamanic performances; plank houses with totem poles equally reflect concepts of transformation from one realm of creation to another and of personification of inanimate objects.[70] Moreover, transformation masks associated with winter ceremonies and masked dances are interpreted as conveying an experience of human-animal metamorphosis.[71] In the dramatic performances of *winter ceremonies* dancers are transforming into spirits, symbolically recreating the original encounters of ancestors with spirit beings from other realms.[72] An example is the Kwakwaka'wawk transformation mask from the former C. Lévi-Strauss collection (inv. 71.1951.35.1), on display at the Louvre's Pavillon des Sessions; when pulling a string, the mask reveals a human face, or slips from the human into a raven: "the transformation mask was constructed so that it could be opened up to reveal the face of another animal, human, or supernatural being on its inside. In this way, the interrelationship of different spirits was revealed with great drama. Such masks were worn to illustrate myths of animal ancestry, to display various crests owned by a chief, or show the interaction of one spirit with another. The added dimension of motion and the dance rendered these works particularly effective [providing] a sense of drama and dynamism".[73] As an aside, Surrealism and abstract expressionism were praising precisely the other-worldly metaphysical qualities of Northwest Coast art, marveling at the transformation of beings into other beings.[74]

Further ceremonial regalia include dancing headdress frontlets[75] and other masks such as Crooked Beak of Heaven[76] (a Cannibal bird), Thunderbird headdresses, used in the Hamatsa dance or cannibal dance, which names a coming-of-age ritual. For the Kwakwaka'wawk, the initiation ceremonial of Hamatsa dance tells of "the story of the Cannibal-at-the end of the World; his village is guarded by large cannibal birds, cannibal Raven and the Crooked-Beak, cannibal Grizzly bear";[77] the ceremony takes place when young initiates earn responsibilities and privileges; they are tamed in the process after fasting and through spirit quests. The ceremony is thought to symbolize controlling the world through controlling hunger:[78]

Animal, bird and fish motifs point back to origins, to the past, as if an invisible but powerful shield intervened between man (present, alive) and nature-inspired myths (past, hovering between life and death). Through dance and the ceremonial season and by the joining of societies like the Kwakiutl Hamatsa Society, or by the display of animal crest frontlets at a potlatch, one could look backwards comfortably to forces which were out of touch with the topical the everyday.[79]

As for the potlatch, it is a ceremony of dance and gift-giving standing for a judiciary system based on reciprocity:[80]

The potlatch is our supreme court where our laws were established and reaffirmed. The potlatch is a public forum where songs, which are inherited as property, are transferred and sung by their rightful owners. It is where the chiefs claim their position. It is where names, titles, and social privileges are handed down to the rightful person through our mothers, since we are a matrilineal society.[81]

In the French tradition, Marcel Mauss, in his book *The Gift: Forms and functions of Exchange in Archaic societies*, describes the potlatch in terms of "a total social phenomenon",[82] which concerns exchanges and contracts between individuals; it is total, in the sense that exchanges are at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, etc.

Interestingly, more recently museum institutions are starting to collaborate with Native communities providing potlatch loans; objects from museum holdings return to indigenous people to be used in memorial potlatches,[83] and, if necessary, to be reconditioned.

4. Modes of Appreciation of Northwest Coast Art

The final section of this paper will be devoted to further conceptualizing the various modes of appreciation of Northwest Coast art. We may schematically organize them into four broad categories: the anthropological stance, the legal stance, the aesthetic stance and the indigenous stance.

4.1. The anthropological stance

It is generally agreed that the first-hand witnesses of Northwest Coast art were early ethnographers and explorers. The first recorded contact between Natives (more specifically Tlingits) and Europeans appears to have occurred in 1741, when the Russian explorer Alexei Chirikov and his crew reach the Northwest Coast.[84] The period of systematic ethnography and collection is however 1774-1871, when Spaniards and British explorers start investigating the coastal belief systems in which these art practices functioned.[85]

The aesthetic status of the Northwest coast artefacts is perceived from the outset, with a high praise for form and appearance; forms are seen as "elegant, well-designed, well-executed" but also "grotesque in appearance, monstruous, crude"[86] etc. But early commentators such as James Cook and George Vancouver are still adopting a rhetoric of racial purity, wherein indigenous creative practices are seen as indicative of race, of a primitive stage of human evolution. To give just an example, James Cook reports that "their manufactures and mechanic arts are far more extensive and ingenious, whether we regard the design or the execution, than could have expected from the natural disposition of the people, and the little progress that civilization has made amongst them in other respects".[87]

The ethnographical specimens collected by early explorers are seen as an indicator of difference of Northwest Coast indigenous people.[88] Nineteenth century anthropology will rehearse some of such biases with respect to value judgments aimed at indigenous artistic expression. Questions related to indigenousness and standards of authenticity of unacculturated, pre-contact arts that were not influenced by European practices become very pressing.

Franz Boas is one of the most prominent Northwest Coast ethnographers. He starts his field work in this area in 1886, in a Kwakwa̱ka'wawk village in British Columbia. Boas criticized the racial discourse of social evolutionism and evolutionist theories of art development[89] stating that the aesthetic capacity is shared by all human beings, only that it is manifested in different ways. The recognition of Northwest Coast art is thought to properly begin with Boas, who paid close attention to the aesthetic qualities of Native American creative practices. He also considers the art of Northwest Coast as mainly decorative, with carvings serving practical, useful ends.[90] As almost all the early commentators – including Cook and Vancouver –

Boas was able to tease out the basic iconography of Northwest Coast art, identifying representations of humans, animals, birds, and fish[91] by their most representative parts: e.g., large incisors for the beaver, large, curved beak for the hawk, blow hole of the killer whale, large dorsal fin, protruding tongue for the bear.[92] Boas has also devised some principles of representation, such as split representation,[93] or the arrangement of parts of the animal on flat surfaces where the animal is cut through and through, but where the natural relations of the parts are preserved,[94] in "a mixture of formalism and realism".[95]

4.2. The legal stance

The legal stance toward Northwest Coast art practices was initially one of downright denial. An example of policy document aiming to suppress Indigenous art practices was The Indian Act (1884), which criminalized the potlatch (1885-1951), a practice that was deemed contrary to the law, as we can read in the following excerpt:

> This Indian festival is a debauchery of the worst kind, and the departmental officers and all clergymen unite in affirming that it is absolutely necessary to put this practice down. […] considerable wealth is all dissipated in the insane exuberance of generosity which seems to be encouraged by these meetings.[96]

An important piece of legislation is the Native Americans Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), issued in 1990,[97] which allows the return of human remains and cultural items removed from Native lands.

Furthermore, continuing the line of making amends for the injustice caused to indigenous communities, the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) states that

> Indigenous people have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.[98]

4.3. The aesthetic stance

With the aesthetic stance, the Northwest Coast art becomes fully appreciated in aesthetic terms. This stance stresses mostly the self-referential nature of works,[99] lying emphasis on the aesthetic quality rather than on the utilitarian character or efficacy of the Northwest Coast art practices in specific ceremonial contexts.

Within this framework, the focus is on the individual achievement of the native artist, who is "believed to solve specific problems of forms relations, by using a repertoire of standardized visual cues",[100] notions related to achievement of works, to virtuosity and technical excellence growing out of craftsmanship are also indigenous aesthetic concepts,[101] only that in indigenous thinking they still require knowledge of legends associated with the ancestral past.[102]

The aesthetic stance comes also with a shift in perceived categories: native creative practices are no longer considered as ethnographic artefacts but as art, whose proper place is in fine arts setting.[103] There are several exhibitions of art which display Native American Art. I will name but a few of them:

First of all, the travelling exhibition *Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* was hosted by the Seattle Art Museum in 1951-1952: "Organized by Erna Gunther for the Taylor Museum, the Colorado Fine Arts Center, and the Seattle Art Museum, it was one of the first exhibitions of Native art to be held in art museum." [104] This said, Seattle Art Museum was a venue for many significant exhibitions of Northwest Coast art.

Furthermore, an important exhibition which laid emphasis on the aesthetic merit of Northwest Coast Indian art, and which included contemporary examples was the Audrey Hawthorn and J. A. Morris 1956 exhibition *People of the Potlatch* at the Vancouver Art Gallery.[105]

Vancouver Art Gallery also hosted in 1967 the exhibition *Arts of the Raven*, which was curated by Wilson Duff, Bill Holm, and Bill Reid. The exhibition is considered to have marked a revival of Northwest Coast Native art and its recognition as high art.[106] *Arts of the Raven* was aiming at marking "an empathic statement of the shift from ethnology to art […] high art, not ethnology, and displaying the aesthetic excellence of forms […] of objects of bright pride",[107] the artefacts were considered to give rise to "aesthetic pleasure" and "enthusiastic appreciation" both on the part of their makers and the receiving audience.

In a contributory article to the art catalogue documenting this exhibition, Bill Reid points to a shared repertoire of "an essential humanity" that would allow such acts of appreciation: "these vanished men and women have emerged through their art out of a formless mass of ancestral and historical stereotypes – warriors, hunter, fishermen, every man his own Leonardo – to become individuals in a highly individual society, differing in every detail of life and custom from us, but in their conflicts and affirmations, triumphs and frustrations, an understandable part of the universal mankind. So, the art, because it embodied the deepest expression of this essential humanity, can be as meaningful and moving to us as it was to them". That we draw on a common repertoire of mental constructs is also a recurrent idea in cognitive anthropology, as we have seen in a previous section in discussing "cognitive attractors".

Finally, other major exhibitions that are worth mentioning are *Sacred Circles: The Indianness of North American Indian Art*, curated by Ralph T. Coe[108] in 1977, which travelled from London to Kansas City and *Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art*, hosted by Seattle Art Museum in 1983-1984.[109]

Such exhibitions of art, which display Native artefacts may be symptomatic of the birth of a globalized appreciative audience,[110] characterized by its visual engagement, and taking pleasure in the immediate sensory configuration given in human perceptual experience. Given the recent globalized reception, it is not unlikely that indigenous artefacts will become an integral part of world art history.[111]

4.4. The indigenous stance

The question then arises as to whether there are Native standards for appreciation: are there any indigenous aesthetic criteria? Do these criteria counter an aestheticization process,[112] or is there any overlapping with it?

Native conceptualizations are very important in this respect. According to Daisy Sewid-Smith, who is a Kwakwaka'wakw linguist,

> When non-Indigenous people, and some of our own non-traditionalists, take cognizance of what we now know as "Northwest Coast Native Art", they scrutinize, and they analyze the object of painting as you would a Rembrandt. They study the light, the shade, the brush strokes, and then they proceed to interpret what they are viewing in European art terms. They see the paintings, carvings, and dances as visual art and nothing

more […] To the traditional indigenous Kwakwaka'wawk, our carvings and representations are not just art objects or paintings. They are alive: they teach, they reveal knowledge of the past. The symbols and carvings cause a spasmodic action in the brain, and torrents of stories and meanings flow to the surface of our remembrance. They explain our existence in the universe. They reveal who we are, where we originated, who our ancestors were, and whom and what they encountered.[113]

A point made in this passage is that for indigenous communities, aesthetic culture is identity involving; it records family history and one's rootedness in a more remote past; such values are fundamental to the native cultures. As we can see, the tensions between a functional and a formalist point of view resurface here. In contrast to a purely formalist stance, the indigenous stance privileges the importance of use and purpose over aesthetic design. Here is Ki-ke-in, in talking about a rattle:

Do I, as a spiritual being, care whether [someone] calls me with a beautifully symmetrical, well finished, slightly-northern-looking, somewhat-reminiscent-of-the-master-of-the-Chicago-settee's-work rattle or calls me with a snuff can with some pebbles in it? Well, I think that all of those things really don't matter. However, in the process of doing it, of calling a *ch'ihaa*, this stuff, this white fluffy down, has great significance.[114]

Finally, one can then ask whether one should dismiss the possibility of an aesthetic stance and withhold appreciation altogether, setting a limit to what we can experience. While there is no distinctive aboriginal aesthetics[115] and despite the limiting effects of the constructs of Western discourse, my take is that we should not abandon entirely the idea of a genuine experiential encounter with such remote creative practices as long as we avoid appropriative interpretive categories.

Acknowledgements

NOTES

[1]   Ancuta Mortu, "The Repertoire as Aesthetic Category", *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics,* vol. 12, 2020, 100-121.

[2]   George E. Marcus, Fred. R. Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction", in George E. Marcus, Fred. R. Myers (eds.), *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Antrhopology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, 1-51.

[3]   Pascal Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, Pascal Boyer, *Minds Make Societies: How Cognition Explains the World Humans Create*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018, 24, 27.

[4]   Jürg Wassmann, Christian Kluge, Dominik Albrecht, "The Cognitive Context of Cognitive Anthropology", in David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bennardo, Victor C. de Munck, Michael D. Fischer (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 57.

[5]   Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 21; Wassmann et al., 47-48.

[6]   Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 246.

[7]   Franz Boas, "The Growth of Indian Mythologies. A Study Based Upon the Growth of the Mythologies of the North Pacific Coast", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 9, no. 32, 1896, 3.

[8]   Norbert Ross, Douglas L. Medin, "Culture and Cognition: The Role of Cognitive Anthropology in Anthropology and the Cognitive Sciences", in David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bennardo, Victor C. de Munck, Michael D. Fischer (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 361-362.

[9]   Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 261-262.

[10]   Pascal Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 7-8.

[11]   Stéphane Breton, Michel Coquet, Michael Houseman, Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps ? Afrique de l'Ouest-Europe occidentale-Nouvelle-Guinée-Amazonie,* Paris, Musée du Quai Branly, 2006 ; Jean-Marie Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", in Yolaine Escande, Johanna Liu (eds.), *Frontières de l'art, frontières de l'esthétique*, Éditions Liu Feng, 2008, 29-42.

[12]   Breton et al., *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps ?*, 201.

[13]   Breton et al., *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps ?*, 17: "En allant dans le sens de l'indigène devenu anthropologue, l'argument de l'exposition *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps* ? est de montrer que le corps tel que nous le pensons est notre invention, l'invention propre de l'Occident. Dès lors qu'il revêt des caractères exotiques qui n'appartiennent qu'à lui, le point de vue occidental – chrétien – doit être traité comme une théorie indigène".

[14]   Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", 32.

[15]   Jean-Marie Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier?", 39-41 ; Marcus & Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture", 4.

16   Bill Holm, "Function of Art in Northwest Coast Indian Culture", in Steven C. Brown, Paz Cabello, Leoncio Carretero Collado, Bill Holm [et al.], *Spirits of the Water: Native Art Collected on Expeditions to Alaska and British Columbia, 1774-1910*, Fundació Caixa de Pensions, Barcelona, 2000, 52.

17   Boyer, Minds Make Societies, 272; Geoffrey Ernest Lloyd, Intelligence and Intelligibility: Cross-Cultural Studies of Human Cognitive Experience, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, 116-117, 121.

18   Ralph T. Coe, "The Grandeur of Northwest Coast Sculpture", in Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art*, Nelson Gallery of Art-Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, p. 127.

19   Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London, Zed Books, 2012, 7.

20   Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 27.

21   Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 44.

22   Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, Ki-ke-in, *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2014, 217, 295, 550.

23   Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 44.

24   Ralph T. Coe, Irene Gordon, Bobby Hansson, *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985,* Bobby American Federation of Arts, 1986, 24.

25   Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 9-10.

26   Ki-ke-in (Nuuchaanulth), in Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 28.

27   Gary Wyatt, *Mythic Beings: Spirit Art of the Northwest Coast*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1999, 7-8.

28   Wayne Suttles, William Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest Coast,* Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1990, 247-248; Coe, *Responsive Eye*, 25; Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 918.

29   Coe, *Responsive Eye*, 5; Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 243; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 78.

30   The most conspicuous attempt is the establishment, around 1900, of the first Indian residential schools in which young Native children were put by force, after being taken away from their homes, in order to learn what it means to be civilized. See Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 27.

31   Ralph T. Coe, "Sacred Circles: The Indianness of North American Indian Art", in Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art*, Nelson Gallery of Art-Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, 15: "The Raven of the Northwest Coast and the far away Great Lakes Thunderbird both wheel within that [sacred] circle. That this circle still turns in the face of the Western take-over of Indian land -which they hold precious above all

else – is an almost miraculous testimonial to the tenacity of the beliefs of the Indian. Only where that core of belief is preserved does American Indian art exist in a state of heath today".

[32] Wilson Duff, "Contexts of Northwest Coast Art", in Wilson Duff, Bill Holm, Bill Reid, *Arts of the Raven: Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian*, Vancouver, The Vancouver Art Gallery, 15 June - 24 September 1967, unnumbered pages.

[33] Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 96.

[34] Allen Wardwell, *Tangible Visions: Northwest Coast Indian Shamans and Its Art*, New York, The Monacelli Press, 1996, 8.

[35] Wardwell, *Tangible Visions*, 197.

[36] Allen Wardwell, *Objects of Bright Pride*: *Northwest Coast Indian Art from the American Museum of Natural History,* American Museum of Natural History, New York Center for Inter-American Relations, New York American Federation of Arts, 1978, 21.

[37] Wardwell, *Tangible Visions*, 13.

[38] Wardwell, *Objects of Bright Pride*, 17.

[39] Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 109.

[40] Wardwell, *Tangible Visions*, 106.

[41] Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 96-97.

[42] Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 95.

[43] Wardwell, *Tangible Visions*, 16.

[44] Erna Gunther, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair Fine Arts Pavilion, April 21 - October 21*, 1962, 13-14.

[45] Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 104.

[46] Ralph T. Coe, "The Grandeur of Northwest Coast Sculpture", in Coe, *Sacred Circles*, 126.

[47] Ralph T. Coe, Irene Gordon, Bobby Hansson, *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985,* Bobby American Federation of Arts, 1986, 15, 42: "Retention of the past is necessary to renewal and change. Loss of a sense of the past means that nothing moves forward. This is a fundamental element in the psychology of Indians, which transcends influences while absorbing them. Things can be lost and found anywhere along the line; they continue, lag, and flow into completeness, but is part of everything else, too."

[48] Peter L. Macnair, Alan L. Hoover, Kevin Neary, *The Legacy: Continuing Traditions of Canadian Northwest Coast Indian Art*, Victoria, British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1980, 29: "There is a great intellectual potential in this art, once the rules are fully mastered. And, despite the constraints of the rules, certain master artists sought to challenge them, displaying a brilliant intelligence that leaves the knowledgeable viewer in awe of the result. Thus we find examples where red is substituted for the

usual primary formline color, where overpainting occurs, where massive, usually angular, formline blocks dominate a given quarter of a design panel, and where no color exists, thinly incised lines defining the formline instead."

49 Wassmann et al., "The Cognitive Context of Cognitive Anthropology", 52.

50 Townsend-Gault et al., *Native Art*, 140, 192, 207, 210, 218-219, 338; Aldona Jonaitis, "Introduction: The Development of Franz Boas's Theories of Primitive Art", in Franz Boas, *A Wealth of Thought: Franz Boas on Native American Art,* Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1995, 6-7.

51 Franz Boas, Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy, *Indian myths & legends from the North Pacific Coast of America*: a translation of Franz Boas' 1895 edition of "Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas", translated by Dietrich Bertz with a foreword by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Talonbooks, 2006, 661: "Today nobody ought to doubt that there are elementary ideas, that the human spirit has brought forth certain cycles of ideas again and again and still does so. But nobody ought to doubt either that there has always been borrowing and transmission of ideas, that ideas take root in foreign soil and either develop independently or perish and are preserved for a long time in strange fragments. But nobody is able to say where the border is between what is developed originally from human spirituality and what requires an outside stimulus for its formation". Franz Boas, "The Growth of Indian Mythologies. A Study Based Upon the Growth of the Mythologies of the North Pacific Coast", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 9, no. 32, 1896, 10-11: "It will be necessary to define clearly what Bastian terms the elementary ideas, the existence of which we know to be universal, and the origin of which is not accessible to ethnological methods. The forms which these ideas take among primitive people of different parts of the world, "*die Volker-Gedanken,*" are due partly to the geographical environment and partly to the peculiar character of the people, and to a large extent to their history. In order to understand the growth of the peculiar psychical life of the people, the historical growth of its customs must be investigated most closely, and the only method by which the history can be investigated is by means of a detailed comparison of the tribe with its neighbors. This is the method which I insist is necessary in order to make progress towards the better understanding of the development of mankind".

52 On the question of "essentializing a spiritual Other", see also Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 76-77.

53 Boyer, *Minds Make Societies*, 254.

54 Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", 31.

55 Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", 30.

56 Schaeffer, "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", 31.

57 Erna Gunther in Allen Wardwell, *Objects of Bright Pride*: *Northwest Coast Indian Art from the American Museum of Natural History,* American

Museum of Natural History, New York Center for Inter-American Relations, New York American Federation of Arts, 1978, 36.

[58] Bill Holm, "Function of Art in Northwest Coast Indian Culture", in Steven C. Brown, Paz Cabello, Leoncio Carretero Collado, Bill Holm [et al.], *Spirits of the Water: Native Art Collected on Expeditions to Alaska and British Columbia, 1774-1910*, Fundació Caixa de Pensions, Barcelona, 2000, p. 47.

[59] Suttles & Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American*, 94, 204.

[60] Marjorie M. Halpin, *Totem Poles: An Illustrated Guide*, Vancouver, Toronto, UBC Press, 2002.

[61] Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 19, 105, 247, 281, 108, 680, 844, 907.

[62] Jackson Rushing III, *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century: Makers, Meanings, Histories*, London, New York, Routledge, 1999, 108, 138, 201.

[63] Ralph T. Coe, Irene Gordon, Bobby Hansson, *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985,* Bobby American Federation of Arts, 1986, 23.

[64] Wyatt, *Mythic Beings,* 8; Bill Reid, *Solitary Raven*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 2000, 94.

[65] Here's one among the many legends gathered by Boas, on the "Origin of People" (legend of the Tsimshian):" Once upon a time, a rock near Nass River and an elderberry bush were in labour at the same time. The bush gave birth to its children first. If the rock had been first, people would be immortal, and their skin would be as hard as stone. But because the elderberry bush was first, they are mortal, and their skin is soft. Only fingernails and toenails show how the skin would have become if the children of the rock had been born first." Franz Boas, Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy, *Indian myths & legends from the North Pacific Coast of America*: a translation of Franz Boas' 1895 edition of "Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas", translated by Dietrich Bertz with a foreword by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Talonbooks, 2006, 561.

[66] Steven C. Brown, Paul Macapia, *Native Visions: Evolution in Northwest Coast Art from the Eighteenth through the Twentieth Century* Seattle Art Museum, University of Washington Press, 1998, 91; Steven Brown, Gail Joice, *The Spirit Within: Northwest Coast Native Art from the John H. Hauberg Collection*, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Rizzoli, 1995, 32.

[67] Franz Boas, "The Growth of Indian Mythologies. A Study Based Upon the Growth of the Mythologies of the North Pacific Coast", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 9, no. 32, 1896, 2.

[68] Suttles, *Handbook,* 221-223.

[69] Starr Davis, Richard Davis, *Tongues & Totems: Comparative Arts of the Pacific Basin,* Alaska International Art Institute, 1974, 7-8.

[70] Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 110.

[71] Suttles, *Handbook*, 83.

72   Halpin, *Totem Poles*, 12.
73   Allen Wardwell, *Objects of Bright Pride*: *Northwest Coast Indian Art from the American Museum of Natural History,* American Museum of Natural History, New York Center for Inter-American Relations, New York American Federation of Arts, 1978, 20.
74   Suttles, *Handbook,* 83; Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 273-274, 291-292.
75   Here's an evocative description of a Tlingit dancing headdress frontlet: "The features of the headdress are the same wherever it is worn: a cylindrical frame- often made of strips of whale baleen and covered with cloth – from the back of which hangs a long panel covered with rows of white ermine skins; an upstanding circlet of the long, springy whiskers of the Steller's sea lion; and a spectacular plaque carved of hardwood, painted and inlaid with abalone shell on the forehead. This plaque, or forehead, is carved to represent a crest or a mythical character. The figure in the center is surrounded by a flange that is usually covered with inset plates of brilliantly iridescent abalone shell. Inlays of the same shell flash from the eyes, teats, and joints. Sumptuous materials surround the intricate plaque. Often the crown is covered with a band of swan skin, luxuriant with white down, or ermines flank the frontlet. …

The dancer appears with blanket and apron and often a raven rattle. Knees slightly bent and legs spread, he jumps on both feet to the time of strong beat – short jump, feet hardly off the floor, making the ermine rows covering his back jump in turn. The blanket was spread by the weaver's arms or elbows. The crown of sea lion whiskers holds a loose fluff of eagle down when the dancing begins. The whiskers rustle and clatter as the dancer bobs and tosses his head, shaking white whisps of down though the whisker barrier to swirl around his dancing figure. The white down means peace, or welcome, to the guests at a potlatch. Chiefs dance to greet canoes invited from far villages. … In its rich composite of material, form, and movement, no Northwest Coast object expresses the ideas of rank and heredity, supernatural power, drama, and aesthetics so well as the dancing headdress." Bill Holm, Peter L. Corey [et al.], *The Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art* [Exhibition], Seattle Art Museum 1984, 19.
76   See Bill Holm, *Crooked Beak of Heaven: Masks and Other Ceremonial Art of the Northwest Coast*, University of Washington, 1972.
77   Wyatt, *Mythic Beings,* 9.
78   Suttles, *Handbook,* 84.
79   Ralph T. Coe, "The Grandeur of Northwest Coast Sculpture", in Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art*, Nelson Gallery of Art-Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, 127.
80   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 29.

[81]   Robert Davidson, "Reclaiming Haida Culture", in Steven Brown, Gail Joice, *The Spirit Within: Northwest Coast Native Art from the John H. Hauberg Collection*, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Rizzoli, 1995, 95. See also Audrey Hawthorn, "People of the Potlatch", in J. A. Morris, *People of the Potlatch: Native Arts and Culture of the Pacific Northwest Coast*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada, 1956, 7-45.

[82]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 229-230.

[83]   Stacey O. Espenlaub, "Building New Relationships with Tlingit Clans: Potlatch Loans, NAGPRA, and the Penn Museum", in Sergei Kan, Steve Henrikson, *Sharing Our Knowledge: the Tlingit and their Coastal Neighbors*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015, 496.

[84]   Suttles, *Handbook,* 223.

[85]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 26.

[86]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 47, 50, 573.

[87]   James Cook, 1785, as cited in Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 58.

[88]   Margaret Dubin, *Native America Collected: The Culture of an Art World,* Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2001, 17, 19, 21, 44, 66, 109.

[89]   Suttles, *Handbook,* 74, 77, 82.

[90]   Franz Boas, "The Decorative Art of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast", *Bulletin American Museum of Natural History*, vol. IX, 1897, 123.

[91]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 52.

[92]   Boas, "The Decorative Art of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast", 136.

[93]   Boas, "The Decorative Art", 123, 147.

[94]   Boas, "The Decorative Art", 175-176.

[95]   Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks*, 8.

[96]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 653.

[97]   R. Eric Hollinger, Harold Jacobs, "A Killer Whale Comes Home: Neil Kuxdei woogoot, Keet S'aaxw, Mark Jacobs Jr., and the Repatriation of a Clan Crest Hat from the Smithsonian Institution", in Sergei Kan, Steve Henrikson, *Sharing Our Knowledge: the Tlingit and their Coastal Neighbors*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015, p. 484.

[98]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 673.

[99]   Coe, *The Responsive Eys,* 53, Duffek, 4-5.

[100]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 978.

[101]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 227, 231, 413; Duffek, *Bill Reid and Beyond,* 6.

[102]   Erna Gunther, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair Fine Arts Pavilion, April 21 - October 21*, 1962, 7-8.

[103]   Townsend-Gault, *Native* Art, 432, 468, 505, 765; Marcus & Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction", 4-5.

[104]   Brown & Joice, *The Spirit Within*, 13.

[105]   J. A. Morris, *People of the Potlatch: Native Arts and Culture of the Pacific Northwest Coast,* Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada, 1956; Michael M. Ames, "Museum Anthropologists and the Arts of Acculturation on the Northwest Coast", *BC Studies*, no. 49, 1981, 8.

[106]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 349sq, 593sq, 619.

[107]   Wilson Duff, Bill Holm, Bill Reid, *Arts of the Raven: Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian*, Vancouver, The Vancouver Art Gallery, 15 June - 24 September 1967, unnumbered pages.

[108]   Ralph T. Coe, "Sacred Circles: The Indianness of North American Indian Art", in Coe, *Sacred Circles*, 9.

[109]   Bill Holm, Peter L. Corey [et al.], *The Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art* [Exhibition], Seattle Art Museum 1984; Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 685.

[110]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 444sq, 510.

[111]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art,* 866, 933.

[112]   Coe, *The Responsive Eye,* 45-46.

[113]   Daisy Sewid-Smith, Kwakwaka'wawk linguist, as cited in Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 15-16.

[114]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 433.

[115]   Townsend-Gault, *Native Art*, 859.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AMES, M. A., "Museum Anthropologists and the Arts of Acculturation on the Northwest Coast", *BC Studies*, no. 49, 1981, 3-14.

BOAS, F., "The Growth of Indian Mythologies. A Study Based Upon the Growth of the Mythologies of the North Pacific Coast", *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 9, no. 32, 1896, 1-11.

BOAS, F., "The Decorative Art of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast", *Bulletin American Museum of Natural History*, vol. IX, 1897, 123-176.

BOAS, F., BOUCHARD, R., and KENNEDY, D., *Indian myths & legends from the North Pacific Coast of America*: a translation of Franz Boas' 1895 edition of "Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas", translated by Dietrich Bertz with a foreword by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Talonbooks, 2006.

BOYER, P., *Minds Make Societies*, Pascal Boyer, *Minds Make Societies: How Cognition Explains the World Humans Create*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018.

BRETON, S., COQUET, M., HOUSEMAN, M., SCHAEFFER, J.-M, *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps ? Afrique de l'Ouest-Europe occidentale-Nouvelle-Guinée-Amazonie,* Paris, Musée du Quai Branly, 2006.

BROWN, S., JOICE, G., *The Spirit Within: Northwest Coast Native Art from the John H. Hauberg Collection*, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Rizzoli, 1995.

BROWN, S., MACAPIA, P., *Native Visions: Evolution in Northwest Coast Art from the Eighteenth through the Twentieth Century* Seattle Art Museum, University of Washington Press, 1998.

COE, R. T., *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art*, Nelson Gallery of Art-Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977.

COE, R. T., GORDON, I., HANSSON, B., *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985,* Bobby American Federation of Arts, 1986.

DAVIS, S., DAVIS, R., *Tongues & Totems: Comparative Arts of the Pacific Basin,* Alaska International Art Institute, 1974.

DUBIN, M., *Native America Collected: The Culture of an Art World,* Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2001.

DUFF, W., HOLM, B., REID, B., *Arts of the Raven: Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian*, Vancouver, The Vancouver Art Gallery, 15 June - 24 September 1967.

ESPENLAUB, S. O., "Building New Relationships with Tlingit Clans: Potlatch Loans, NAGPRA, and the Penn Museum", in Sergei Kan, Steve Henrikson, *Sharing Our Knowledge: the Tlingit and their Coastal Neighbors*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015, 496-507.

GUNTHER, E., *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair Fine Arts Pavilion, April 21 - October 21*, 1962.

HOLLINGER, R. E., JACOBS, H., "A Killer Whale Comes Home: Neil Kuxdei woogoot, Keet S'aaxw, Mark Jacobs Jr., and the Repatriation of a Clan Crest Hat from the Smithsonian Institution", in Sergei Kan, Steve Henrikson, *Sharing Our Knowledge: the Tlingit and their Coastal Neighbors*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015, 483-495.

HOLM, B., *Crooked Beak of Heaven: Masks and Other Ceremonial Art of the Northwest Coast*, University of Washington, 1972.

HOLM, B., COREY, P. L.[et al.], *The Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art* [Exhibition], Seattle Art Museum 1984.

HOLM, B., "Function of Art in Northwest Coast Indian Culture", in Steven C. Brown, Paz Cabello, Leoncio Carretero Collado, Bill Holm [et al.], *Spirits of the Water: Native Art Collected on Expeditions to Alaska and British Columbia, 1774-1910*, Fundació Caixa de Pensions, Barcelona, 2000, 46-52.

JONAITIS, A., "Introduction: The Development of Franz Boas's Theories of Primitive Art", in Franz Boas, *A Wealth of Thought: Franz Boas on Native American Art,* Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1995.

LLOYD, G. E., *Intelligence and Intelligibility: Cross-Cultural Studies of Human Cognitive Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

MACNAIR, P. L., HOOVER, A., NEARY, K., *The Legacy: Continuing Traditions of Canadian Northwest Coast Indian Art*, Victoria, British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1980.

MARCUS, G., MYERS, F. R., "The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction", in George E. Marcus, Fred. R. Myers (eds.), *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Antrhopology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, 1-51.

MORRIS, J. A., *People of the Potlatch: Native Arts and Culture of the Pacific Northwest Coast,* Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada, 1956.

MORTU, A., "The Repertoire as Aesthetic Category", *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics,* vol. 12, 2020, 100-121.

REID, B., *Solitary Raven*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 2000.

ROSS, N., MEDIN, D. L., "Culture and Cognition: The Role of Cognitive Anthropology in Anthropology and the Cognitive Sciences", *in* David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bennardo, Victor C. de Munck, Michael D. Fischer (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 357-375.

SCHAEFFER, J.-M., "Comment rendre étranger le familier ?", in Yolaine Escande, Johanna Liu (eds.), *Frontières de l'art, frontières de l'esthétique*, Éditions Liu Feng, 2008, 29-42.

SUTTLES, W., STURTEVANT, W., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest Coast,* Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1990.

TOWNSEND-GAULT, C., Jennifer Kramer, Ki-ke-in, *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2014.

SMITH, L. T., *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London, Zed Books, 2012.

WARDWELL, A., *Objects of Bright Pride*: *Northwest Coast Indian Art from the American Museum of Natural History,* American Museum of Natural History, New York Center for Inter-American Relations, New York American Federation of Arts, 1978.

WARDWELL, A., *Tangible Visions: Northwest Coast Indian Shamans and Its Art*, New York, The Monacelli Press, 1996.

WASSMANN, J., KLUGE, C., ALBRECHT, D., "The Cognitive Context of Cognitive Anthropology", in David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bennardo, Victor C. de Munck, Michael D. Fischer (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 47-60.

WYATT, G., *Mythic Beings: Spirit Art of the Northwest Coast*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1999.

CĂTĂLIN ȚĂRANU

Born in 1988, in Romania

Ph.D., University of Leeds, Institute for Medieval Studies (2016)
Thesis: *The Making of Poetic History in Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia*

Independent Researcher, Medieval English Literature

Fellowship
Institute for Research in the Humanities, University of Bucharest (2017-2018)

Conference presentations in UK, Sweden, Germany, Romania, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland

Published several scholarly articles, book chapters

Book
The Bard and the Rag-picker: Vernacular Verse Histories in Early Medieval England and Francia, London: Routledge, 2021

SHAME IN THE EMOTIONAL LIFE OF GERMANIC HEROIC POETRY

Abstract

Far from being uncomplicated celebrations of individual heroism, Germanic heroic poems are often tragic tales foregrounding the reckless pursuit of personal glory and the burden of shame as the sources of complex societal problems. This article explores how shame and honour are conceptualized and experienced in texts like *Beowulf* and *Hildebrandslied*. Concretely, it will analyse how these poems articulate ambivalences about heroic culture and its hypermasculine poetic paragons in light of the lived realities of their Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian martial elite audiences. Methodologically, this research builds on recent work on the sociology and psychology of honour and shame and its negative societal and individual effects. This article aims to clarify the socio-emotional dynamics of honour and shame on which the heroic ethos is based inside the texts and for their audiences.

Keywords: Germanic heroic poetry, *Beowulf*, the *Hildebrandslied*, the history of emotions, shame, honour cultures

Two enemy armies face each other, bristling with hate across an empty field. The battle has not started yet, and it never will because two men from their ranks step into the makeshift arena to face each other instead. One is a grizzled veteran, the other is a fiery young warrior who recently earned his laurels in battle. They are the champions of their respective kings and they are about to fight each other to the death. What nobody except Hildebrand, the older man, knows is that his opponent is his son, Hadubrand. Hildebrand is in a double bind: to refuse the duel thereby becoming a coward, less than a man, earning shame for himself, his king, and his band of brothers; or try to gain the honour that is the currency of his warrior way of life by fighting and possibly killing his only son, which is a form of suicide in a society where the only ways for a man to win some kind of immortality is being honoured in songs after death or ensuring a male lineage (Ward 1983, 9).

This is the double bind at the heart of the ninth-century Old High German heroic poem known as the *Hildebrandslied* (Braune and Ebbinghaus 1994). For many in the early medieval martial elites amongst which similar Germanic verse was produced and consumed, this conundrum would have been a living emotional reality, as it revolved around shame as the dark emotional core of the socio-emotional economy of honour they participated in and that is represented (in however stylized a form) in these texts. Like many other Germanic heroic poems, *Hildebrandslied* describes the lives and deeds of heroes, figures larger than life leading their existence according to a code of honour always ready to fight, win treasure and glory through deeds of socially-condoned violence.

Germanic heroic poetry (henceforth, referred to by the acronym "GHP") has often been taken for a window on early medieval society or at least on the behaviour and ideals of the elite male portion of it. Yet the relationship between Germanic heroic poetry and the social realities of, for instance, ninth-century Carolingian Francia, is much more complicated. Outside obviously eulogizing texts like the Old English *Battle of Brunanburh* singing the praises of king Æthelstan's 937 victory over a coalition of Olaf Guthfrithson, King of Dublin, Constantine II, King of Scotland, and Owain, King of Strathclyde, many heroic poems are fundamentally tragic texts, full of double binds like the one just pointed out. Even though their heroes, like Siegfried and Beowulf, appear at first sight as admirable figures inhabiting the perfect image of hegemonic masculinity of an honour-based society like those of their audiences (usually male war-making elite), often these texts offer subtle critiques not only of the heroes themselves, but also of the entire way of life they lead. Yet these insider critiques are often elided over in most scholarly and popular accounts of Germanic heroic verse due to the way we are still reading this corpus – namely, through a nineteenth-century Romantic nationalist and masculinist filter.

Past and current research on GHP is skewed towards philological and literary approaches to individual texts and usually lacks in cohesive theories to explain the work it fulfilled in early medieval society. The few attempts to understand it in the social and political contexts of its diverse audiences fail through an ahistorical comparatist view that elides the differences both between the diverse socio-cultural environments in which it flourished and between ancient Germanic culture as described by Tacitus's *Germania* (itself mostly a propagandistic fiction) and medieval societies nine centuries later describable as 'Germanic' in little else but language (Murdoch 1996; Murdoch 2004; Magennis 2010). Other such

studies, while illuminating, are implicitly based on the tenuous assumption that the world within *Beowulf* is coterminous with Anglo-Saxon society at large (Hill 2000; Baker 2013). Critiques of these views highlight the complex relationship between early medieval society and GHP and argue against taking the latter at face value as evidence for the former (Goffart 1995; Frank 1991a; Frank 1991b).

At the same time, there has been little attempt to explain the socio-emotional workings of heroic poetry – Barbara Rosenwein's seminal study fails to even mention it (Rosenwein 2006). The recent work on Anglo-Saxon emotions is valuable but mostly addresses individual cases limited to particular texts, few of which are heroic (McCormack *et al.* 2015). The present article aims to contribute a few methodological and theoretical footnotes towards a fuller and more nuanced account of the socio-emotional role of heroic verse in Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian societies through a theory of socially-interactive emotion drawn from recent research on the sociology and psychology of honour and shame, thus placing GHP in a wider methodological and intertextual context.

In terms of methodology, I build on the perspectives brought by John Niles and Scott Gwara. Niles has successfully used his 'anthropology of the past' to reveal the social life of Anglo-Saxon poetry by exploring the meaning of texts and social practices in terms of an "integrated theory of culture, whereby any one element, as in human language, takes on meaning in relation to other elements" (Niles 2007, 83). Gwara's reading of *Beowulf* proposes that rather than being mouthpieces for a purported 'transcendental heroic ideal' (Hill 2000, 112), secondary characters in the poem debate the hero's motivations and effectiveness, modelling a wide spectrum of reactions to the same issues in the audience outside the poem (Gwara 2008). In this understanding, the comments made by members of the male warrior community who would bear the brunt of the consequences of Beowulf's actions provide what he terms "the subaltern perspective", the main source of conflicting opinions on the hero and the honour culture in the poem.

Moreover, I will bring the rich sociological and psychological literature on honour cultures of the past two decades (referenced previously) to bear on the study of GHP, since both the fictional social world inside the poems and the societies in which the latter emerged were, by all definitions, honour-based societies (Nisbett and Cohen 1996). Members of honour cultures regard their reputation (positive social evaluation) as their most treasured possession, far more important than money or property. Thus,

they will go to great lengths to maintain or earn more honour because its loss leads to social rejection under the form of shaming. These studies of the dynamics of honour and shame in such cultures has much to offer to my exploration of these issues in GHP, since its audiences were most likely male members of war-making elites who "zealously cultivated and jealously defended their warlike reputations" (Baker 2013, 15). This is a culture ripe for violence and anxieties, since honour is always in need of being proven (usually by symbolic or physical deeds of violence that can escalate easily) because its main ingredient is the opinion of others.

Hence, this article aims to redress the two main scholarly models by which previous literature misrepresents the complex relationship between the society inside GHP (intratextual), the society outside it which produced and received it (medieval audiences), and the society which GHP purports to describe (quasi-mythical ancestral Germanic society in the heroic age): 1. that GHP is a mirror held up to reality, i.e., that the fictional society inside the poem and the historical society outside the poem which produced and received it are coterminous; 2. that GHP idealizes and holds up for praise a presumed "transcendental heroic ideal", in its instantiations in the *comitatus* ethic (i.e., serving one's lord even when it means killing your own son, as in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*), suicidal loyalty (as in *The Battle of Maldon*).

As I have demonstrated more extensively elsewhere, Germanic heroic poetry did not simply serve as a mirror held up to life, nor was it upholding the heroic way of life as ideal, and it should therefore be used very carefully and only in conjunction with other types of discourse to reconstruct the social realities of their audiences (Taranu 2021, 199). In other words, this corpus of verse often acted more like a dream screen (Earl 1994, 129-36) or a socio-cultural sandbox through which elite textual and emotional honour-based communities worked through and negotiated cultural anxieties, political changes, moral dilemmas, socio-emotional upheavals, and individual fears and desires. More sophisticated texts like *Beowulf* or the *Waltharius* were ludic spaces in which burning socio-political and cultural issues could be toyed with, allowed to measure against each other, brought to their ultimate consequences in a 'parallel version of reality that helps make the world intelligible and navigable' (Niles 2007).

Adopting Derek Neal's argument about high medieval romance, such texts can be seen as functioning like a collective dream meant to "solve problems and deal with conflicts that are too difficult for conscious life" or, to use John Niles's terms, as "a form of play, a mental theater" that

"not only give voice to a given mentality or worldview, but also in which issues of worldview are precisely what are at stake" (Neal 2008, 10; Niles 1998, 146). This type of imaginative literature, then, is a precious resource for understanding social realities, and more specifically, for how emotions were performed by their audiences, not as mirror images of social reality, but as a repertoire of scripts for the performance of emotion (Scheer 2012) as well as a space for collective reflection on and negotiation of socio-cultural norms.

For instance, a close reading of many of these Germanic heroic poems suggests that the male protagonists display, "through their heroic acts, also some form of monstrous behaviour which severely undermines the whole notion of heroism" (Classen 2003, 296). And, as Ralph O'Connor shows, a wide range of corpora of heroic literature (Old Norse, Old Irish, Ancient Greek, alongside GHP) "did not always invite their audiences to identify with the dehumanized warrior in any simple manner. Sometimes forthright disapproval is implied" (O'Connor 2016: 181). While Beowulf is a killer of monsters, he, too, is described by the poet in terms that are identical to those attributed to Grendel and his mother (Taranu 2021, 203). They are both *angenga* or *anhaga* ("solitary", *Beowulf* 449a and 2368a), *gebolgen* ("swollen up with rage", *Beowulf* 723b and 1539b), *healðegnes* ("hall-thanes", *Beowulf* 142a and 719b), and *wrecca* ("wanderers in foreign lands"); both killed thirty men at once, so they share a co-extensive identity, being each other's alter ego (Gwara 2008, 17; Köberl 2002, 98; Cohen 1999). Furthermore, deducing from the comments of the poet or some of the characters' reactions to the protagonist, Beowulf may not have been perceived as an exemplary hero or a perfect leader, "nor did darkness lie exclusively outside of him", and as such, even for the most sympathetic audience, he might have appeared as "a man who [was] not fully likable or understandable" (Dragland 1977, 606; Rosen 1993).

Other texts, like the *Hildebrandslied* or the Persian, Irish, and Russian heroic poems depicting similar father-son duels (to be discussed below) bring into the limelight conflicts that are deeply embedded in the configuration of values at the heart of heroic masculinity and the honour-based habitus it is usually constructed upon. Thus, far from being uncomplicated celebrations of individual heroism (as they are usually interpreted), the more sophisticated Germanic heroic poems like *Beowulf* and the *Waltharius* actually foreground issues that are at the heart of the entire socio-emotional economy on which heroic masculinity is built, by having subaltern characters voice the constant dilemma: at what point

does the pursuit of individual honour become counterproductive for the community its success is based on? (Gwara 2008, 25).

Indeed, Scott Gwara has argued very convincingly for *Beowulf*'s ambivalence about its protagonist as a feature of the text itself rather than as a post-factum projection stemming from a modern indecision as to which cultural paradigm (such as the "heroic code" or Christian morality) the hero is judged against, when in fact, "this dual consciousness comprises the poet's subject". (Gwara 2008, 13). Rather than being unconditionally in awe of the hero, not all the inhabitants of *Beowulf*'s warrior society approve of his confidence, and some worry about the consequences of his success. The problematic aspects of Beowulf's actions or motivations that are explicitly (although sometimes ambiguously) touched on in the text are often elided in scholarly conversations because of the assumption that he is either presented as heroic (according to a putative "Germanic heroic code") or sinful. Gwara's reading proposes instead that characters in the poem debate Beowulf's motivations and effectiveness, allowing for (and anticipating) a wide spectrum of reactions to the same issues in the audience outside the poem (Gwara 2008, 13). We do not have these voices in the *Hildebrandslied*, but in the following I argue that the entire poem consists of one such dissenting voice in early medieval society, and indeed, that it is not the only text engaged in this emic deconstruction of honour-based heroic masculinity by pointing to the role of shame in this destructive habitus.

The purpose of this article, then, is to read a selection of heroic verse, mainly the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* and, less exhaustively, the Old English *Beowulf*, as insider critiques of the role of shame and correlated emotions in the social economy of honour described by these poems and familiar to the martial elites producing and consuming these texts. In this endeavour, I will bring to bear on these medieval texts a range of insights from recent research in sociology and psychology which have the benefit of casting these texts in a fresh light, through which to better understand the emotional lives of the early medieval textual and emotional communities gathering around such texts. I begin with a discussion of the previous ways in which these texts have been understood, with special reference to the role of shame and honour in the social world depicted in these poems (which should not be assumed to be coterminous with the social worlds of their various audiences, but which were not isolated from each other, either) – not just a literature review, but a dialogue with the rich past historiography on these medieval poems. Then, I go on to

propose a new set of critical lenses (mostly from the social sciences) through which passages of these poems will be interpreted.

***

It is better to die than to live in (and even merely feel) shame. The sentiment is expressed time and again by heroic characters in Ancient Greek epic, Old English heroic poetry, Old Norse sagas, Middle English and French chivalric romances: from Njál choosing to go down with his burning house rather than live on unable to avenge his sons in the Old Icelandic *Njáls saga* to Roland refusing to retreat when overwhelmed by enemies so that no shaming song would be sung about him in *The Song of Roland*. Meanwhile, a one-eyed Irish king reportedly chose to tear out his only remaining eye rather than face the humiliation of being ridiculed in songs (Ward 1983, 5). Were these mere rhetorical flourishes? Or was shame such a powerfully painful emotion in the societies creating, consuming, and circulating these texts that such fictional avowals might have reflected lived experiences?

For there are historical accounts of similar behaviours, in which death is an acceptable price for honour or for washing away shame. In Jean Froissart's chronicle account, the blind Bohemian king Jean of Luxembourg rode into battle to his death at Crécy in 1346, possibly to redeem himself after he had fled the field during a previous battle (Taylor 2012). Meanwhile Byrhtnoth, the Anglo-Saxon leader of an inexperienced troop meeting a raiding Viking army, allowed the latter out of an excessive sense of honour to move to a favourable position enabling them to defeat and kill him (*Maldon* 1981).

Despite official exhortations to more soul-saving reading, heroic literature in various genres (sagas, Germanic heroic verse, chansons de geste or chivalric romance) was enormously popular among aristocratic audiences throughout the Middle Ages all over Europe, and provided one of the main cultural forms through which their members conceptualized and engaged with their social reality. In eighth-century Mercia, for instance, the later Saint Guthlac decided to become a warband leader when "he remembered the valiant deeds of heroes of old" (Colgrave 1956, 80), while in the fourteenth-century poem *Vows of the Heron*, knights are satirized for thinking themselves the peers of Oliver and Roland (Taylor 2012).

And beyond the gulf between imaginative literature and social reality, the characters in these texts spend most of their time and energy striving to avoid shame, or to restore honour once it has been diminished, while

their aristocratic audiences, too, organized their social existence around honour as one of their key values. For this literature not only entertained, but also socialized and enculturated the members of the elites into certain patterns of behaviour, not as a mere pedagogical manual of aristocratic morality, but as a repertoire of the possible actions, gestures, and linguistic expression delineating the "rules of the game" (Bourdieu 1990; Scheer 2012), and ultimately, as a space of cultural experimentation where these very patterns were called into question, played with, and negotiated (Taranu 2021). The point is not that medieval literature is a transparent mirror to social mores, but that fictional behaviors bear some relation to those of flesh-and-blood people. And the nature of this relation is still in need of being clarified and contextualized for each text and each genre of this corpus, in each cultural space at various points in time.

This is the point of departure of this article. For if all genres of medieval heroic literature have at their centre honour and associated emotions like shame or anger, then the way these were voiced and performed in these texts participated in the broader constellation of discourses making up the cultural systems of meaning which mediated the social reality of medieval elites. It is the structure and functionality of literary emotional performances related to honour and shame that I propose to chart and investigate, as a fruitful entry-point to a more fine-grained and holistic understanding of some aspects of the emotional life of medieval elites. Its main topic of research, to be clear, is literary emotionality, approached as a set of distinct but interrelated grammars of social action and linguistic expression – and only secondarily its relationship to social reality. By exploring the points where heroic verse provides critiques of the harmful societal effects of pursuing honour at all costs, I seek to provide a fuller picture of the way early medieval martial elites conceptualized the heroic ethos.

What did it feel like, as an individual living in elite communities where one's honour was always in need of being proven, to read or listen to such texts? How did such experiences of textual consumption impact the way its audiences conceptualized and performed emotion in their own lives? What can such imaginative texts tell us about how the norms of manifesting emotion changed over time and in transition between different cultural spaces in medieval Europe? It is questions such as these that the present article aims to answer, and in doing so, to reframe the way in which historical emotion, medieval literature, and the socio-affective economy of honour among medieval elites have been studied. Still, this

remains a desideratum – a single article can only aim to provide pathways to answer these questions by exploring socio-emotional performances and cultural and linguistic expressions of shame in a selected corpus of medieval heroic verse by using methodologies drawn from the history of emotions, the sociology of honour cultures, and the psychology of shame.

***

The study of emotions in premodern societies has been flourishing for the past two decades, drawing on insights gained from the social sciences to literary, historical, and legal texts. Shame and its connection to honour has been a particular interest of philosophers, psychologists, historians, and the greater public. Throughout the imaginative literature of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, we encounter a moral and emotional landscape rooted in shame and honour that appears strikingly alien from the institution- and dignity-based, modern liberal societies grounded in Enlightenment values familiar to most people in the Global North (the "Western World"). Shame is often maligned as a remnant of traditional societies. It serves as a marker for the moral otherness of the Middle Ages, a foil against which our enlightened modernity can shine more brightly.

Yet shame has never been far away. Indeed, modern affect theory, developed by Silvan Tomkins, posits that shame is at the centre of a set of nine genetically predetermined *affects* – the biological components of emotion that lie beneath the different socially- and culturally-bound scripts that make up *emotions* (Sedgwick and Frank 1995). And as sociologists often argue, shame (in its different manifestations such as body shaming, cyberbullying, fear of rejection, low self-esteem, disrespect, stigma, honour, revenge, violence) is in fact just as dominant in modern societies as it was in premodern ones, though in different ways (Scheff 2011). Furthermore, psychiatrists like James Gilligan propose that shame is the origin of most violence, especially in communities revolving around honour, such as prison inmates, gangs, or societies in the Middle East, Mediterranean, or Southern USA (Gilligan 1997; Novin *et al.* 2015). Shame is an unbearably painful affect for people acting according to honour-based socio-emotional scripts and leads to spiralling shame and deploying violence to erase that shame (evident, for instance, in the honour killings of women perceived as dishonoured by their family). From studying the dynamics of honour and shame in societies that are distant from us, there emerges the possibility that we will be able to better understand our modern troubled relationship with shame.

The historical study of emotions has been flourishing for the past two decades (Ronsenwein 2007; Champion&Lynch 2015; Jaeger&Kasten 2003). Yet this scholarly edifice is rising on a very fragmented set of methodological foundations and on problematic theoretical assumptions. Most of it consists of very localized studies of a particular emotion in a particular text or set of texts (Jorgensen *et al.*, 2015; Boquet&Nagy 2009) or of studies that are strictly linguistic, tracing the lexicon of a certain emotion in a particular medieval language with little interest in its socio-cultural underpinnings (Yeandle 2001; Ogura 2006; Tissari 2006). More ambitious attempts at broader surveys dispense with any need for a theoretical framework, producing insightful musings that tend to be descriptive rather than explanatory (Boquet-Nagy 2015; Miller 1993), or offer more of an intellectual history of theories of emotion (Rosenwein 1998). Historical-anthropological approaches, despite steering scholarly conversation away from naïve psychologism, are interested in emotion only insofar as it functioned within elaborate political rituals, upholding a well-oiled social machinery (Althoff 1997; Müller 1998; Smail&Fenster 2003). Most of these studies draw a sharp distinction between the study of premodern emotions in literature and in social reality (Rikhardsdottir 2017), despite the latter being always culturally-mediated through discourses based on structures of thought and feeling also shared by the former – literary emotion is overall understudied.

Much work has been done on more visible and less elusive emotions such as anger (Hyams 2003; Rosenwein 1998) or grief (Garrison 2015), especially insofar as they functioned in a system of revenge, feuding or, more generally, violence (Baker 2013; Throop&Hyams 2016). Shame has received far less attention (Boquet 2008), usually studied as a religious emotion (Jorgensen 2013; Burrus 2008), from a strictly functionalist perspective seeing it as the counterweight of honour in a zero-sum social game (Miller 1993), or within the problematic but surprisingly resistant paradigms of shame vs. guilt cultures (Gauvard 1991) or of a "civilizing process" moving Europe closer to modernity (Elias 1939; Jaeger 1985; Gvozdeva&Velten 2012).

The main problems with this scholarly landscape are both logistic and methodological. First, they tend to be isolated along lines that are both national/linguistic and disciplinary, so that no comparative work is done across the various related corpora separated by language (with valuable exceptions like Rikhardsdottir 2017) or textual genre. Second, the common preconception underlying most of this rich, though fragmented work is that

emotions are subjective manifestations of interiority, ineffable drives, and that therefore the textual traces with which we work can never capture the "real experience" of the people behind them. Yet this assumption is highly problematic, based on post-Romantic sensibilities presuming that "authentic" sentiment is incompatible with what are often seen as literary commonplaces and formulaic expressions (Garrison 2001).

A different approach provides a way out of this conundrum. Emotion has recently begun to be understood as fundamentally social and performative (Scheer 2012; Flannery 2020), arising out of the myriad daily interactions guided by culturally-constructed practical scenarios or scripts that we are socialized in (Longo 2020). Resisting norms of emotionality and behaving off-script are also part of this dynamics, but are unintelligible without recognizing the rules of the game structuring emotional expression and behaviour in general that we absorb unthinkingly through daily practice (Lutz&Abu-Lughod 1990; Bourdieu 1990), which leaves room for personal agency. In other words, emotions do not happen to us. Rather, we enact emotions, and it is the cultural scripts and the field of possibilities they delineate that give meaning to the mostly undifferentiated physiological impulses that we feel (Feldman 2017).

One of the main ways in which we are enculturated in these scripts beside social mimesis (Willerslev 2007) is through the media that we consume and share. Especially in the medieval context, the consumption of "literature" (a modern category that obscures the socio-cultural work that medieval literary genres perform) is an essentially social experience, being not so much read in isolation but heard, seen, shared with a textual and emotional community (Stock 1983; Rosenwein 2007), indeed, co-created by its performers and public (Hanning 1981). As such, it was part and parcel of the culturally-constructed "shared structures of meaning" (Garrison 2001) which mediate reality, playing an important part in the socialization and enculturation of its elite audiences. Literary performances and vocalizations of emotions in literature have to be recognized by their audiences as meaningful in order for the saga, romance, or heroic poem to engage them (Rikhardsdottir 2017). For these reasons, literature is a valuable (though still mostly untapped) source for the understanding of historical emotions.

Then, if emotions are not just interior, physiological events, but also emerge through discourse and social interaction (Lutz&Abu-Lughod 1990) and as practice (Scheer 2012) structured according to culturally-constructed scripts (Pancer 2008; Schank&Abelson 1977; Gibson 2008), they can be

identified in literary representations of emotive performance and practice that enabled audiences to relate emotionally to these texts (Rikhardsdottir 2017). Tracing the lexicons of shame in the languages of the corpus is only a first step in this endeavour, because, despite being discourse constructions, emotions are not limited to verbal expressions, including also social actions, gestures, cultural scenarios, patterns of correlation with other emotions and acts associated with the broad emotional spectre of shame.

A closer reading of texts like the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* in the light of the strictures that the ever-present spectre of shame places on the individuals that are part of honour-based communities, allows us to come to the conclusion that the negative consequences of this psycho-social dynamics were indeed clear to the medieval audiences of such texts. Building on recent work on the sociology and psychology of honour-based cultures, traditional gender scripts of masculinity, and the gender-role stress associated with them, I will trace the emotive scripts of "heroic" masculinity as rooted in shame and marked by the anxiety of never being man/honourable enough.

But at this point, the question might arise as to the relevance of all this research on emotions, and more particularly, shame, to studying honour cultures in general, and more specifically, the "heroic" society depicted in heroic verse and the behavioural ideal it proposes for its audience. Less verbosely – what has shame got to do with honour?

<div align="center">***</div>

It is true that in Anglo-Saxon England, Carolingian Francia, or the imagined quasi-mythical fifth century serving as the background for the *Hildebrandslied* and much of the corpus of GHP, and indeed in many other premodern cultures, "the highest levels of society were organized around war-making" (Baker 2013, 3). In his study of the social economy of violence and honour in *Beowulf*, Baker convincingly paints the picture of the audience of heroic poetry as a "warrior elite whose male members zealously cultivated and jealously defended their warlike reputations and whose women participated in the bellicosity in their own way" (Baker 2013, 3). In such premodern societies, a man's value was determined by his prowess as a warrior, and consequently, "everything worth having – status and the things that came with it: wealth, land, a desirable wife – depended on his lord's recognition of this prowess" (Baker 2013, 3). Honour, Baker concludes, is thus closely connected to "the practice of violence, the warrior's craft: it is an essential component of the identity of

the fighting man" (Baker 2013, 3). But to win honour it is not enough to perform socially-condoned violent acts (such as killing one's enemies on the battlefield or in a duel, or taking revenge for insults or for the death of kin or friend). Rather, "honour's sole ingredient is the opinion of others, so that whoever wishes to win it is constantly influenced by the people around him", and for this reason, "honour is an unstable commodity, always rising or falling in value" (Baker 2013, 3).

Yet honour is not an emotion. It is a name for the social capital all members of an honour-based community instinctively know they have. One can *have* honour, but what one viscerally *feels* (and desperately wants to avoid) is shame – indeed, we know that other primates also feel "proto-shame" (Maibom 2010, 577). Recent research in the social psychology of honour cultures underlines the extent to which shame and derivative meta-emotions such as fear of shame or shame about shame are central to the development of the self in such environments – more on this important phenomenon after a continuation of my discussion on the topic of honour in studies of Germanic heroic poetry.

Shame is indeed, more elusive, harder to identify than other more visible emotions like anger or love, and has consequently enjoyed far less attention. When it has been studied outside of its religious dimensions, it has often been seen as the inverse of honour, although just as often these studies of medieval honour tend to treat the emotions at its core as the byproduct heat of the social engine rather than its fuel. As such, honour is assumed to work according to a more or less implicit "code of conduct" (which, is assumed to have changed at some point from that of "Germanic" heroism to one based on chivalry). More sophisticated theories of honour among medievalists are either structuralist, seeing honour as a stabilising force in society, functional especially in societies lacking (strong) central authorities, like medieval Iceland (Sørensen 1993), or economistic, whereby honour is a scarce resource for which agents in a zero-sum economy of honour are in competition (Baker 2013; Miller 1993; see the general review in Barreiro 2016 and critique in Posner 1990).

But such functionalist views obscure the way in which a total system of socio-emotional meaning like an honour culture permeates everything from relationships between people to individual and collective structures of thought and feeling. At any rate, honour is not an emotion. It is a name for the social capital all members of an honour-based community instinctively knows they have. One can *have* honour, but what one viscerally *feels* is pride or shame. That shame is often correlated with suicide or homicide

(Hastings *et al.* 2002; Velotti *et al.* 2014) and that both arise more frequently in communities where honour and traditional gender norms prevail is attested by a solid body of psychological research (Scheff *et al.* 2018; Saucier *et al.* 2016; Baugher *et al.* 2015). And while drawing conclusions about past societies on the basis of research on contemporary individuals is problematic, this dynamics is often at the core of the social dynamics heroic literature and chivalric romance. Albeit they are still described as ideal embodiments of Germanic heroic or chivalric ideals of behaviour (Reichl 2010; Jaeger 1985), most of the heroes in these texts are deeply flawed, and it is the societal tensions making their flaws possible that these texts often bring into the limelight (Classen 2003; Niles 2007).

More simply put, feuding, flytings (verbal duels), acts of random or calculated violence, and even the concept of honour often used to vaguely subsume all such behaviours, do not in fact explain the emotions involved in the acts and utterances of the characters that perform them, but are merely some of the patterns of social action in which these emotions are deployed. This is not to say that emotions are the "real" fuel of the acts and behaviours depicted by sagas and described by Miller and Baker *et al.*, but that emotions are not some afterthought or some interior reaction secondary to these proceedings. Rather they are part and parcel of social action, at least in these emotionally-charged narratives. One cannot set out to avenge one's kinsman even in the face of probable death if the spectre of shame does not inflict actual pain, if real anger is not whetted by some old retainer, or if real grief had not been culturally scripted as being quenchable only by revenge. And neurological and psychological research shows that "social pain" like shame elicits very palpable physical pain via the same neural pathways (Velotti *et al.* 2014, 455). Shame and correlate emotions (anger, the fear of shame, the recursive shame of being ashamed) are thus the emotional core of what is often regarded in legalistic terms as the "code of honour", or by using functionalist approaches such as the gift economy (Baker 2013) or extended kinship (Miller 1993) which cannot account for the role of emotion in the web of socio-cultural meaning they aim to describe.

***

I now return to the *Hildebrandslied* to highlight the importance of the emotional tension accumulating within individuals struggling at the limits of the honour-based moral system they are at pains to instantiate and the lack of explanatory power of economistic models of such social dynamics. The situation presented just before does not seem an impasse from our

perspective – why doesn't the old man, upon recognizing his son, just fling his weapons to the ground and run to embrace him? In his society, however, he cannot: he is *untar heriun tuem*, "between two armies". This means that both of them are in full view of all the warriors on their respective sides, so that each participant is having his actions judged by all his companions and their enemies (Ward 1983, 7). To behave under these circumstances in any way that would damage one's image would be calamitous: it would lead to ridicule, which in turn would mean shame and disgrace and the loss of all esteem in the eyes of others (Ward 1983, 7).

Within the limits of his culture, Hildebrand tries to prevent the battle, though, and the poem is at pains to show that none of his attempts work out due to both men being in full sight of their respective companions and thus liable to lose face and feel shame. When he recognizes the enemy champion as his son, Hildebrand attempts to placate the young warrior with gifts worthy of an honourable, even if enemy, warrior: gold rings and weaponry, but Hadubrand scorns the older man's attempts at peace and ups the ante by calling him out as an old man trying to buy his way out of a clean fight (Ward 1983, 8). Hildebrand's attempts to placate his son, his offering of the gift, his attempts to show kindness were thus under the most unyielding kind of surveillance, and he was making himself vulnerable to the ridicule of the members of both armies, i.e., shame. When he makes his fateful decision, the words he chooses give an indication of just how his actions until now have been judged: "he would be the most contemptible of the eastern-army who would deny thee battle when thou yearnest so much for it" (Ward 1983, 8).

The key word is OHG *argosto* (most vile, contemptible, cowardly, etc.). The very concept is loaded with the profound inevitability of Hildebrand's tragedy (Ward 1983, 8). It is the superlative form of the adjective *arg*, the same word used in Old Norse *argr* to designate and classify the worst offenses a man could commit in a premodern masculinist honour-shame society: bestiality, pederasty, effeminacy, sorcery, cowardice etc. (Ward 1983, 8). These were the offenses that made one susceptible to attack by the singers of the *niðvisa* (shaming verses considered an especially harsh type of insult in medieval Norse and Icelandic society). In these societies, to accuse another man of being *argr* was a legal reason to challenge the accuser to *holmgang* (a type of close duel). If duel was refused by the accused, he could be outlawed, as this refusal proved that the accuser was right and the accused was *argr* ('unmanly, cowardly'). If the accused fought successfully in *holmgang* and had thus proven that he was not *argr*,

the *niðvisa* was considered an unjustified, severe defamation, and the accuser had to pay the offended party full compensation (Ward 1983, 9).

While this Scandinavian institutionalisation of shaming was not current in Carolingian society, we can imagine similar connotations lay behind the word *argosto* and Hildebrand's decision to fight his son. As a heroic poem, the *Hildebrandslied* is fairly certainly not meant to present this way of life as ideal, as it focuses on what happens when it is taken to breaking point – its subject is one of the intrinsic contradictions of this social system: that of shame being a force that can needlessly kill a valuable member. Thus the possibility of living the shame of giving up battle sought by the foreign warrior outweighs Hildebrand's natural love for his son.

Yet this situation is not unique to ninth-century Carolingian male aristocracy. The motif of an old hero who must fight his son and kill him is widespread throughout Indo-European heroic verse traditions: we encounter it in Irish and Russian medieval literature, and in Persian heroic verse. In *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* (*The Tragic Death of Aífe's Only Son*), a part of the Old Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*), the hero Cú Chulainn kills his son Conlaí. In the Persian epic Shahnameh by Ferdowsi (c. 1000 CE), Rostam kills his son Sohrab. In a popular Rus' *bylina* Ilya Muromets kills his son Podsokolnik. Still, the *Hildebrandslied* foregrounds the most social aspect of the choice between killing one's son and a potential loss of honour. But all of these heroic poems show the societies in which they were composed and performed (Persian, Russian, Irish, Carolingian) preoccupied with the dark side of shame, the negative effects of this dynamics.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In order to fully understand how these heroic poems were shaped by and affected their audiences' emotional lives and sense of the self, we need to understand how the emotional economy of shame and honour works from the perspective of the social psychology of honour-based cultures. The following theoretical considerations aim to explain why in such cultures violence, honour, shame, and masculinity are so intricately woven together.

As we have seen, in honour cultures, people's worth is defined in terms of their claim to honour but also by the extent to which they are considered honourable by society. Hence, honour has both an internal and an external component. Because of this emphasis on strong reputations, men in honour cultures perceive interpersonal threats more readily than men in other cultures do (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). They are obliged to

respond to such threats vigorously, even violently, which can be both dangerous and difficult (i.e., it can and often does involve physical retaliation). Proper retaliation is perceived as necessary for maintaining one's reputation as well as one's personal sense of masculinity. In other words, a man's sense that he is a "real man" (and also his reputation for being such) depends on his ability to successfully defend himself, his name, and his kin against any and every threat (Scheff *et al.* 2018). Failure in any particular instance can undermine both a man's private sense of self-worth and, just as importantly, his public reputation (Scheff *et al.* 2018).

What is a member (and specifically a man) of an honour-based culture most afraid of? Shame. How does one prevent being ashamed and/or feeling shame in such a community? Violence. This is the nutshell account of a very rich literature on the vicious cycle Honour-Shame-Violence. Some useful steps toward a general theory of the causes of violence were suggested by James Gilligan through his experiences as a prison psychiatrist. For many years, he asked the prisoners why they had committed murder; most of the answers took the same form: "because he dissed (disrespected) me". This answer implied to Gilligan that they had used anger and violence to avoid shame. From this background, Gilligan proposed: "The emotion of shame is the primary or ultimate cause of all violence… Anger is a necessary but not a sufficient cause of violence… The different forms of violence, whether toward individuals or entire populations, are motivated (caused) by shame." (Gilligan 1997, 110-111) Furthermore, Gilligan described the conditions under which shame leads to violence: "the shame is a secret, probably the most carefully guarded secret of violent men… so intense and so painful that it threatens to overwhelm him and bring about the death of the self" (Gilligan, 1997, 112).

Gilligan also highlights the connection between masculinity and shame-motivated violence. The majority of multiple killers were men, and social psychological research suggests that male multiple killers experience "masculinity threats", or negative assessments of their masculine identity, from peers (Scheff *et al.* 2018; Saucier *et al.* 2016; Baugher *et al.* 2015). Men feel shame for their perceived inability to meet societally expected masculine standards. Thus, hypermasculinity, or exaggerated male-associated behaviour, acts as a sort of "defense against shame", a means of ensuring that no one can perceive them as being "insufficiently masculine" (Scheff *et al.* 2018).

We can see men performing this type of masculinity in response to their subjective perception of another's evaluation of their masculinity.

As such, we can understand the heroic ethos in GHP as a response to "living in the minds of others", and, therefore, as an "overcorrection or a defensive tactic against anticipated shame" (Scheff *et al*. 2018). The idea that people spend much of their time and energy involved in or avoiding shame was central to the work of Erving Goffman: "there is no interaction in which participants do not take an appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated" (Goffman 1990, 243). This means that shame and/or its anticipation haunts all social interaction. Avoidance of shame is the driving force behind Goffman's theory of impression management (Scheff *et al*. 2018).

To consider identity through the lens of Goffman's dramaturgical perspective as social performance is a powerful lens through which to view the otherwise baffling spectacle of heroes engaged in what to a modern reader looks like escalations of conflicts over the pettiest of reasons. Performers in the social arena always engage in "impression management", seeking to control the impression others have of them (Goffman 1990). This looking glass-self, shaped by the emotional mechanisms of pride and shame which encode the response to the gaze of the other, is at the junction of public and private. Building on Kemper (1978), shame can also be seen less as a situational emotion and more as a structural emotion that marks the adherence to a certain social category and which accompanies a loss of status.

For emotions are a key element of social interactions and more precisely, of mechanisms of societal control of behaviour and enforcing conformity with the norm. Shame in particular is understood as part of a system of emotional sanctions that doubles down on the external mechanisms of reward and punishment that buttress societal norms (Scheff 1988). Goffman (2013) investigates the individual anticipation of social embarrassment as a mechanism for internalizing the need to conform, helping in engineering compliant social performers.

With regards to the role of violence in this dynamics, Jeff Elison *et al*. (2014) confirmed Gilligan's research by developing evolutionary and psychobiological models which explain the multiple paths through which social pain may lead to anger and/or aggression. The chain of events begins with (perceived) threats of social exclusion or personal devaluation, which elicit social pain, and shame is one variety of social pain, evolving as a reaction to the threat of social exclusion (Scheff *et al*. 2018). Social pain elicits the same reactions as physical pain via the anterior cingulate cortex (Eisenberger, 2011). In other words, shame can

be very much as physically painful as any injury. And as Scheff explains, since the threat-defense mechanism to physical pain must often be rapid and automatic, operating prior to conscious evaluation, shame may result in maladaptive defensive aggression, even against innocent others (Scheff *et al*. 2018). In this context, anger and aggression in response to shame are understandable as emotion regulation, coping strategies, and evolutionary adaptations (Scheff *et al*. 2018).

To come back for one final time to the *Hildebrandslied*, the end of the poem has been lost, but comparative evidence from the other Indo-European versions of the father-son duel suggests that here, too, the father killed his own son. And, as Ward explains, since Hildebrand was a man who, except for his son, was without blood relatives (*friuntlaos man*), this is a form of suicide, for in heroic poetry blood lineage is accorded supreme importance (Ward 1983, 9). Thus, in the honour-based community he is part of, Hildebrand is in a lose-lose situation: if he lets himself be accused of cowardice in full view of all, he would open himself to the ridicule and humiliation that would destroy him, his ancestors, and his progeny, who even alive, would never be able to outlive the disgrace, but if he slays his own son, he has to live with the pain of this terrible deed and condemn himself to a form of lineage suicide (Ward 1983, 9).

For these reasons, the "master affect" (Scheff 2003), the central emotion in the socio-emotional economy depicted in Germanic heroic poetry is shame, understood in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's terms as the most deeply personal and intensely social of emotions and as the place where the question of self and identity arises "most originarily and most relationally" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003, 37). Sedgwick describes shame as a performance whereby one absorbs and acts out the emotions of others. Given its dual nature (as intimate experience and as communication), shame is also a cultural barometer. Hence, studying the dynamics of shame enables us to understand better the economy of other emotions and culture-specific constructions of selfhood. Building on the above-mentioned work on the sociology and psychology of honour-based cultures, traditional gender scripts of masculinity, and the gender-role stress associated with them, I have aimed to trace the emotive scripts of "heroic" masculinity as based on emotional performance rooted in shame and marked by the anxiety of never being man/honourable enough.

In conclusion, GHP contain both laudatory articulations of a hypermasculinist heroic ethos and voices that question it. This ambivalence voiced (and provided a model for) potential reactions of audiences

to embodiments of a potentially destructive, anti-social masculinity. Thus, the heroes' moments of weakness and doubt (like Hildebrand's) emerge as moments of discontinuity in a presumably monolithic heroic hypermasculine ethos. As such, GHP emerges as a field of negotiation for cultural anxieties and societal questions that troubled their intended audiences, in this case, the use and abuse of violence stemming from the dynamics of honour and shame among war-making elites.

My contribution has explored the way in which the audiences of these poems (mostly belonging to honour-based elite groups in ninth- and tenth-century England and Francia) related to these conundrums in light of their lived social and emotional realities – more precisely, the extent to which shame was experienced as a prosocial emotion in these communities. I have explored the ways in which shame (including secret shame, and meta-shame) and the pursuit of honour are conceptualized and experienced in these poetic sources, integrating them in the larger constellation of contemporary legal and religious texts, while incorporating questions and approaches from cognitive anthropology and social psychology (work on modern-day honour-based societies, such as that by Nisbett and Cohen). In doing this, I propose a significant shift in the terms of the scholarly conversations around honour by introducing the dimensions of shame and the violence it can engender. My foray into early medieval poetic sources can also provide a helpful counterpart to research on more top-down and/or later sources.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

Beowulf = Klaeber's Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, ed. by Robert D. Fulk, Robert H. Bjork and John D. Niles, fourth edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, fourth edition, 2008).

Felix's Life of St. Guthlac, ed. and trans. by Bernard Colgrave Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

Hildebrandslied = Althochdeutsches Lesebuch, ed. by Wilhelm Braune and Ernst A. Ebbinghaus (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), pp. 84-85.

Secondary sources

Althoff, G. 1997. *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde.* Darmstadt: Primus.

Baker, P. 2013. *Honour, Exchange and Violence in* Beowulf. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer.

Baker, Peter, *Honour, Exchange, and Violence in 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, 2013)

Barrett, L. F. 2017. *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Baugher, Amy R., and Julie A. Gazmararian, 'Masculine Gender Role Stress and Violence: A Literature Review and Future Directions', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 24 (2015), 107-112

Boquet, D. 2008. 'Introduction. La vergogne historique : éthique d'une émotion sociale'. *Rives nord-méditerranéennes* 31 (Histoire de la vergogne): 1–12. Boquet&Nagy 2009

Boquet, D. and P. Nagy. 2015. *Sensible Moyen Âge. Une histoire des émotions dans l'Occident médiéval.* Paris, Éditions du Seuil. English translation, *Medieval Sensibilities. A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, transl. Robert Shaw. London, Polity Press, 2018.

Bourdieu, P. 1990. The Logic of Practice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Burrus, V. 2008. *Saving Shame. Martyrs, Saints and Other Abject Subjects.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Champion, M. and A. Lynch, eds. 2015. *Understanding Emotions in Early Europe.* Turnhout: Brepols.

Classen, Albrecht, 'The Downfall of a Hero: Siegfried's Self-Destruction and the End of Heroism in the "Nibelungenlied"', *German Studies Review*, 26 (2003), 295–314.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Connell, R. W., and J. W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, 19 (2005), 829-59

Courtenay, W. H., 'Engendering Health: A Social Constructionist Examination of Men's Health Beliefs and Behaviors', *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 1 (2000), 4-15

Dienstbier, Richard A., 'The Role of Emotion in Moral Socialization', in *Emotions, Cognition, and Behavior*, ed. by C. E. Izard, J. Kagan and R. B. Zajonc (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 494–514

Dragland, S. L., 'Monster-Man in Beowulf', *Neophilologus*, 61 (1977), 606–18.

Earl, James, *Thinking About Beowulf* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Elias, N. 1939. *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, vol. 2. Basel: Verlag Haus zum Falken. English translation, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formations and Civilizations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Flannery, M. 2020. *Practising Shame: Female Honour in Later Medieval England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Forms of Individuality and Literacy in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods, ed by Franz-Joseph Arlinghaus (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015)

Frank, Roberta, 'Germanic Legend in Old English Literature', in Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 88-106

Frank, Roberta, 'The Ideal of Men Dying With Their Lord in the Battle of Maldon: Anachronism or Nouvelle Vague', in Ian Wood and Niels Lund, eds., *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 95-106

Garrison, M. 2001. 'The study of emotions in early medieval history: some starting points. *Early Medieval Europe* 10: 243–50.

Garrison, M. 2015. 'Early Medieval Experiences of Grief and Separation through the Eyes of Alcuin and Others: The Grief and Gratitude of the Oblate'. In *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture,* edited by A. Jorgensen, F. McCormack, and J. Wilcox, 227–261. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Gauvard, Claude, *"De grace especial". Crime, État et société en France à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991).

Gibson, D. E. 2008. 'Emotion Scripts in Organizations: A Multi-Level Model'. In *Research Companion to Emotion in Organizations,* edited by N. Ashkanasy and C. L. Cooper, 263–83. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Gilligan, James, *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (New York, 1997)

Goffart, Walter, 'Conspicuous by Absence: Heroism in the Early Frankish Era (6th-7th cent.)', in Teresa Pàroli, ed., *La Funzione dell'eroe germanico: Storicità, metafora, paradigma: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio Roma 6-8 maggio 1993* (Rome, 1995), pp. 41-56

Goffman, Erving, 'Embarrassment and Social Organization', in *Hauptwerke der Emotionssoziologie* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013)

Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Every-day Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1990)

Gvozdeva, K., and H. R. Velten, eds. 2012. *Scham und Schamlosigkeit: Grenzverletzungen in Literatur und Kultur der Vormoderne*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Gwara, Scott, *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf* (Leiden, 2008)

Gwara, Scott, *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Hanning R. W. 1981. 'The Audience as Co-Creator of the First Chivalric Romances'. *Yearbook of English* Studies 11: 1-28

Hill, John, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic*: *Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville, 2000)

Hugh Magennis, 'Germanic Legend and Old English Heroic Poetry', in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford, 2010), pp. 85-100

Hyams, P. R. 2003. *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jaeger, S. 1985. *The Origins of Courtliness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jaeger, S., and I. Kasten, eds. 2003. *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter/ Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages.* Berlin: De Gruyter. Järvinen&Miller 2014

Jorgensen, A. 2013. '"It Shames Me to Say It": Aelfric and the Concept and Vocabulary of Shame'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 41: 249–76.

Jorgensen, A., F. McCormack, and J. Wilcox, eds. 2015. *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Kemper, Theodore, *A Social Interaction Theory of Emotions* (New York: Wiley, 1978)

Köberl, Johann, *The Indeterminacy of Beowulf* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002).

Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. and Adam Frank (eds.). *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Duke University Press, 1995).

Lees, Clare *et al.*, eds., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, 1994)

Longo, M. 2020. *Emotions through Literature: Fictional Narratives, Society and the Emotional Self*. London: Routledge.

Lutz, C., and L. Abu-Lughod. 1990. 'Introduction: Emotion, Discourse, and the Politics of Everyday Life'. In *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, edited by C. Lutz, and L. Abu-Lughod, 1–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mahalik, J. R., G. E. Good, M. Englar-Carlson, 'Masculinity Scripts, Presenting Concerns, and Helping Seeking: Implications for Practice and Training' *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34 (2003), 123-31.

Maibom, Heidi, 'The Descent of Shame', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 80 (2010), 566-94.

McCormack, Frances, Wilcox, Jonathan, and Jorgensen, Alice, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture* (Surrey, 2015)

Miller, W. I. 1993. *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence.* Ithaca: Cornell.

Müller, J.-D. 1998. *Spielregeln Für Den Untergang*: Die Welt Des Nibelungenliedes. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Murdoch, Brian, ed., *German Literature in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2004)

Murdoch, Brian, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge, 1996)

Neal, Derek, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Niles, John D., *Old English Heroic Poems and the Social Life of Texts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

Niles, John D., 'Reconceiving *Beowulf*: Poetry as Social Praxis', *College English*, 61 (1998), 143–66.

Nisbett, Richard and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honour: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, 1996)

Novin, Sheida *et al.*, 'Honor and I: Differential relationships between honor and self-esteem in three cultural groups', *Personality and Individual Differences* 86 (2015) 161-63.

O'Connor, Ralph, 'Monsters of the Tribe: Berserk Fury, Shapeshifting and Social Dysfunction in T*áin Bó Cúailnge, Egils saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*', in *Kings and Warriors in Early North-West Europe* ed. by Jan Erik Rekdal and Charles Doherty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), pp. 180–236.

Ogura, M. 2006. 'Old and Middle English Verbs of Emotion'. *Poetica* 66: 53–72.

Osterman, Lindsey, and Ryan Brown, 'Culture of Honor and Violence Against the Self', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(2012), 1611-1623

Pancer, N. 2008. 'Les hontes mérovingiennes: essai de méthodologie et cas de figure'. *Rives nord-méditerranéennes* 31 (Histoire de la vergogne): 41–56.

Posner, R. A. 1992. 'Medieval Iceland and Modern Scholarship (reviewing William Ian Miller, Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law and Society in Saga Iceland (1990)), *Michigan Law Review* 90: 1495–1511.

Reichl, K. 2010. 'Heroic Epic Poetry in the Middle Ages.' In *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, edited by C. Bates. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rikhardsdottir, S. 2017. *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts, Studies in Old Norse Literature.* Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer.

Rosen, David, 'The Armor of the Man-Monster in Beowulf', in *The Changing Fictions of Masculinity*, ed. by David Rosen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 1–25.

Rosenwein, B. 2007. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Rosenwein, B., ed. 1998. *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Rosenwein, Barbara, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006)

Saucier, Donald A., Amanda J. Stanford, Stuart S. Miller, Amanda L. Martens, 'Masculine Honor Beliefs: Measurement and Correlates', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 94 (2016) 7-15.

Schank, R., and R. Abelson. 1977. *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry Into Human Knowledge Structures.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Scheer, Monique, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is that What Makes them have A history)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding emotion'. *History and Theory*, 51 (2012) 193–220.

Scheff, Thomas, *Emotions and violence: shame and rage in destructive conflicts* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991)

Scheff, Thomas, 'Shame and Self in Society', *Symbolic Interaction* 26 (2003) 239-262

Scheff, Thomas, 'Social-emotional origins of violence: A theory of multiple killing', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 16 (2011) 453-60

Scheff, Thomas, Reginald Daniel, Joseph Sterphone, 'Shame and a Theory of war and violence', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 39 (2018) 109-115

Smail, D. L., and T. S. Fenster, eds. 2003. Fama: *The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Sørensen, P. M. 1993. *Fortælling og ære: Studier i islændingesagaerne.* Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Spiegel, G. 1990. 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages.' *Speculum* 65 (1): 59–86.

Stock, B. 1983. *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Taranu, C. 2021. *The Bard and the Rag-picker: Vernacular Verse Histories in Early Medieval England and Francia.* London: Routledge.

Taylor, C. 2012. 'Military Courage and Fear in the Late Medieval French Chivalric Imagination.' *CRMH* 24: 129-147.

Throop, S., and P. Hyams, eds. 2016. *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud*. London: Routledge.

Tissari, H. 2006. 'Conceptualizing Shame: Investigating Uses of the English word *shame*'. In *Selected Proceedings of the 2005 Symposium on New Approaches in English Historical Lexis*, edited by R.W. McConchie, O. Timofeeva, H. Tissari, & T. Säily, 1418–1991.

Velotti, Patrizia, Jeff Elison, Carlo Garofalo, 'Shame and aggression: Different trajectories and implications', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19 (2014) 454-61

Ward, Donald, 'Honor and Shame in the Middle Ages: An Open Letter to Lutz Röhrich', *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung*, 27/28: 'Festschrift für Lutz Röhrichzum 60. Geburtstag' (1982/1983) 1-16

Willerslev, R. 2007. *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. University of California Press.

Yeandle, D. 2001. *'Schame' im Alt- und Mittelhochdeutschen bis um 1210*. Heidelberg: Winter.

NEW EUROPE FOUNDATION
NEW EUROPE COLLEGE

Institute for Advanced Study

New Europe College (NEC) is an independent Romanian institute for advanced study in the humanities and social sciences founded in 1994 by Professor Andrei Pleșu (philosopher, art historian, writer, Romanian Minister of Culture, 1990–1991, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1997-1999) within the framework of the *New Europe Foundation*, established in 1994 as a private foundation subject to Romanian law.

Its impetus was the *New Europe Prize for Higher Education and Research*, awarded in 1993 to Professor Pleșu by a group of six institutes for advanced study (the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar, the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, Uppsala, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin).

Since 1994, the NEC community of fellows and *alumni* has enlarged to over 600 members. In 1998 New Europe College was awarded the prestigious *Hannah Arendt Prize* for its achievements in setting new standards in research and higher education. New Europe College is officially recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research as an institutional structure for postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences, at the level of advanced studies.

Focused primarily on individual research at an advanced level, NEC offers to young Romanian scholars and academics in the fields of humanities and social sciences, and to the foreign scholars invited as fellows appropriate working conditions, and provides an institutional framework with strong

international links, acting as a stimulating environment for interdisciplinary dialogue and critical debates. The academic programs NEC coordinates, and the events it organizes aim at strengthening research in the humanities and social sciences and at promoting contacts between Romanian scholars and their peers worldwide.

Academic programs organized and coordinated by NEC in the academic year 2020-2021:

- **NEC Fellowships (since 1994)**
  Each year, the NEC Fellowships, open both to Romanian and international outstanding young scholars in the humanities and social sciences, are publicly announced. The Fellows are chosen by the NEC international Academic Advisory Board for the duration of one academic year, or one term. They gather for weekly seminars to discuss the progress of their research, and participate in all the scientific events organized by NEC. The Fellows receive a monthly stipend, and are given the opportunity of a research trip abroad, at a university or research institute of their choice. At the end of their stay, the Fellows submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the New Europe College Yearbooks.

- **Ştefan Odobleja Fellowships (since October 2008)**
  The Fellowships given in this program are supported by the National Council of Scientific Research and are part of the core fellowship program. The definition of these fellowships, targeting young Romanian researchers, is identical with those in the NEC Program, in which the *Odobleja* Fellowships are integrated.

- **The Pontica Magna Fellowships (since October 2015)**
  This Fellowship Program, supported by the VolkswagenStiftung (Germany), invites young researchers, media professionals, writers and artists from the countries around the Black Sea, but also beyond this area (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine), for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice. The program welcomes a wide variety of disciplines in the

fields of humanities and social sciences. Besides hosting a number of Fellows, the College organizes within this program workshops and symposia on topics relevant to the history, present, and prospects of this region. This program is therefore strongly linked to the former *Black Sea Link* Fellowships.

- **The Pontica Magna Returning Fellows Program (since March 2016)**
  In the framework of its *Pontica Magna* Program, New Europe College offers alumni of a previous *Black Sea Link* and *Pontica Magna* Fellowship Program the opportunity to apply for a research stay of one or two months in Bucharest. The stay should enable successful applicants to refresh their research experience at NEC, to reconnect with former contacts, and to establish new connections with current Fellows.

- **The Gerda Henkel Fellowships (since March 2017)**
  This Fellowship Program, developed with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany), invites young researchers and academics working in the fields of humanities and social sciences (in particular archaeology, art history, historical Islamic studies, history, history of law, history of science, prehistory and early history) from Afghanistan, Belarus, China (only Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice.

- **The Spiru Haret Fellowships (since October 2017)**
  The *Spiru Haret* Fellowship Program targets young Romanian researchers/academics in the humanities and social sciences whose projects address questions relating to migration, displacement, diaspora. Candidates are expected to focus on Romanian cases seen in a larger historical, geographical and political context, in thus broadening our understanding of contemporary developments. Such aspects as transnational mobility, the development of communication technologies and of digitization, public policies on migration, the formation of transnational communities, migrant routes, the migrants' remittances and entrepreneurial capital could be taken into account.

NEC also welcomes projects which look at cultural phenomena (in literature, visual arts, music etc.) related to migration and diaspora. The Program is financed through a grant from UEFISCDI (The Romanian Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding).

- ### *Lapedatu Fellowships (since June 2018)*

  Thanks to a generous financial contribution from the *Lapedatu* Foundation, NEC invites to Bucharest a foreign researcher specialized in the field of Romanian Studies, who is currently conducting research in one of the world's top universities. On this occasion, he spends a month in Romania and works with a young Romanian researcher to organize an academic event hosted by the NEC. At this colloquy, the *Lapedatu* fellows and their guests present scientific papers and initiate debates on a theme that covers important topics of the Romanian and Southeastern European history in both modern and contemporary epochs. The contribution of the *Lapedatu* family members to the development of Romania is particularly taken into consideration.

- ### *Porticus N+N Fellowships (since 2020)*

  The 'Nations and Nationalisms' (N+N) Program, developed with financial support from the Porticus Foundation, aims to approach one of the main challenges faced by societies around the globe, but mainly in Central and Eastern Europe: a growing tension between nationalizing and globalizing forces in a world dominated by migration, entanglement, digitization and automation. The *Porticus N+N* Fellowships are open to international candidates working in all fields of the humanities and social sciences with an interest in the study of nations, varieties of nationalism and/or populism, and the effects of globalization on national identities. Fellowship criteria are aligned with those in the other programs hosted by the institute. NEC aims to use the expertise of the *Porticus N+N* fellows to encourage scholarship and critical thinking among targeted groups of students in Romania and the region.

- • **AMEROPA Fellowships (since 2020)**
  Organized with financial support from Ameropa and its subsidiaries in Romania, and with academic support from the Centre for Government and Culture at the University of St. Gallen, this program aims to investigate the conditions and prerequisites for democratic stability and economic prosperity in Romania and the neighboring region. The *Ameropa* Fellowship Program is open to early career Romanian researchers in history, anthropology, political science, economics or sociology. Their projects focus on aspects relevant for the challenges to democratic consolidation, economic development and strengthening of civil society in Romania and the region. Conditions and selection criteria are similar with those specific to all NEC fellowships. Each year, an annual workshop is organized in the framework of the *Ameropa* Program.

<div align="center">***</div>

New Europe College has been hosting over the years an ongoing series of lectures given by prominent foreign and Romanian scholars, for the benefit of academics, researchers and students, as well as a wider public. The College also organizes international and national events (seminars, workshops, colloquia, symposia, book launches, etc.).

An important component of NEC is its library, consisting of reference works, books and periodicals in the humanities, social and economic sciences. The library holds, in addition, several thousands of books and documents resulting from private donations. It is first and foremost destined to service the fellows, but it is also open to students, academics and researchers from Bucharest and from outside it.

<div align="center">***</div>

Financial Support

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation of Switzerland through the   Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen

The Ministry of National Education – The Executive Agency for Higher Education and   Research Funding, Romania

Landis & Gyr Stiftung, Zug, Switzerland

VolkswagenStiftung, Hanover, Germany

Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Düsseldorf, Germany

Porticus Stiftung, Düsseldorf, Germany

Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart, Germany

Marga und Kurt Möllgaard-Stiftung, Essen, Germany

European Research Council (ERC)

Lapedatu Foundation, Romania

Ameropa and its subsidiaries in Romania

Administrative Board

Dr. Ulrike ALBRECHT, Head of Department, Strategy and External Relations, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Bonn

Emil HUREZEANU, Journalist and writer, Ambassador of Romania to the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin

Dr. Romiță IUCU, Professor of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, and Vice Rector of the University of Bucharest

Dr. Dirk LEHMKUHL, Chair for European Politics, University of St. Gallen; Director of Programmes International Affairs & Governance, Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen

Dr. Antonio LOPRIENO, Professor of Egyptology and former Rector, University of Basel, President of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, ALLEA

Dr. Florin POGONARU, President, Business People Association, Bucharest

Dr. phil. BARBARA STOLLBERG-RILINGER, Professor of History, University of Münster, Rector of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

Dr. Heinz–Rudi SPIEGEL, Formerly Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, Essen