Cultural Studies

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ROMANIAN HOLOCAUST IN TESTIMONIAL LITERATURE AND FILMS: FROM TRIVIALIZATION, DENIAL TO WORKING THROUGH THE PAST (PART 1)[1]

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Abstract

Synthesizing the way in which the Romanian Holocaust has been represented in testimonial literature and films, this article deals with notions such as Holocaust trivialization and denial, as well as with "mastering the Romanian past" of the interwar period and WW2. The article is a cartography of the representations of the Romanian Holocaust; to that end, it follows the chronology of post-1945 published literary works (documentary texts, memoirs and fiction) and documentary and artistic films which were produced about the Romanian Holocaust in Romania and outside Romania.

Keywords: Romanian Holocaust; memory; representations; literature; films.

1. The Romanian Holocaust

If Holocaust trivialization and denial are terms that have been frequently used and do not need further explanations, "mastering one's past" (synonymous to "working through one's past") is a phrase that we borrow from German historiography and cultural studies (see Adorno, 1959/1998).[2] Our choice to bring this notion into a discussion on Romania is not arbitrary but based on historical evidence provided by reputed world experts on Jewish studies, historians, political scientists or international studies researchers. Some of their findings include the following:

1. Romania was "the most anti-Semitic country of pre-war Europe […] with an inordinately high percentage of plain murderers," with "the severest in Europe, Germany not excluded" anti-Jewish legislation (Arendt, 1964, p. 90).[3] Antisemitism had become "an integral

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[2] In this text, all translations from Romanian are ours, unless otherwise indicated.
[3] Arendt's conclusion is supported by Ezra Mendelsohn: the "prewar Romania had a well-deserved reputation for being, along with Russia, the most antisemitic country in Europe" (1987, 174). See also Eaton, 2013, Hausleitner et al, 1995 and Ioanid, 1990 and 2000 for the roots of antisemitism in Romania; Ancel, 2011 for the presentations of 19th century poets who preached for the isolation of the Jews, details about Alexandru C. Cuza (1857–1947), the Goga Government (28 December 1937–10 February 1938), King, Carol II's dictatorship (February 1938–August 1940) and its policy toward the Jews, Romania's

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part of public discourse in Romania" in the 19th century, in the "context of debates surrounding Jewish emancipation" (Cârstocea, 2014a, p. 6) that were supposed to give Jewish people rights. The revision of Article 7 of the 1866 Constitution which extended the Jewish people's naturalization was accompanied by notions of conspiracy that were published in various journals, as well as antisemitic 'theories' combined with "accusations of separatism, economic imperialism, and international conspiracy" spread by several of "the most prestigious political and cultural personalities in the country: Mihail Kogălniceanu, Vasile Alecsandri, Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Conta, Nicolae Iorga, and Alexandru C. Cuza, to name only a few" (Cârstocea, 2014a, p. 6). In the thirties, the virulence of the antisemitic discourse intensified once Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, who had established the Legion of the Archangel Michael on June 24, 1927, appeared on the political scene; he portrayed the Jewish population as the "ultimate evil, displacing all the economic, social and cultural problems confronting Romania (and Europe) into one comprehensive enemy image" (Cârstocea, 2014b, p. 48). After the instalment of the Goga-Cuza government, Jewish people started to lose their rights.[4]

2. The Romanian Holocaust had a unique status as, apart from Germany, "no nation took such an active role in the murder of its Jews as Romania" (Kenez, 2013, p. 176);[5] the summer 1940 pogroms "had no connection with the Nazis," occurring "before the first German soldier even set foot on Romanian soil" (Ancel, 2011, p. 71). According to Snyder (2010, 229), "Romania, Germany's major military ally on the eastern front after 1941, was the only other state to generate an autonomous policy of the direct mass murder of Jews," since "[h]istorically, antisemitism was far more integral to Romanian political life" than to that of Germany. Romania was not occupied by Germany, yet, as Dan Stone remarked,

> [t]he Holocaust did not only happen where the state was destroyed by the Nazis; Poland is the best example of where this was the case, but Romania shows the opposite, that is, that where the heads of a functioning state want to carry out criminal policies on a huge scale and then to halt them, they will find reasons and resources to do so. (2023, p. 147)

After the Iaşi massacre, in June–July 1941 Jewish men were put into the "death trains" that transported them from Iaşi to Călăraşi and to Podul Iloaiei in scorching heat for hours. In

intelligentsia "rhinocerization", the attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church toward the "Jewish problem;" see Shapiro, 1974 for the Cuza-Goga government's antisemitic legislation; see Bozdoghină, 2012 for a presentation of Cuza's policies; see Clark, 2015a, 2 for the presentation of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938) who signaled a "Jewish question," set up the Legion of the Archangel Michael (later the Iron Guard) and "combined political assassination, street violence, and antisemitic hate speech with romantic nationalism, religious symbolism, and charity projects;" on Codreanu, Horia Sima, the Iron Guard, see also Nastasă, 2011; Tudor, 2014; Weber, 1966; on how Nazi propaganda penetrated the Romanian academic system, see Nastasă-Matei, 2016; Matei & Nastasă-Kovács, 2018; Nastasă-Matei, 2021; for a though-provoking study on how the Nazi propaganda convinced the biggest community of Swabians and how "elaborated discursive strategies" managed to change "Romania's interwar socio-political profile," see Panu, 2014; on antisemitism, the Romanian pogroms, Antonescu, see Ancel, 2005; Beris, 2014; Braham, 1994 and 1997; Benjamin, 1996, 2003a and 2003b; Brustein, 2003; Catherwood, 2002; Cârstocea, 2009, 2014a, 2014b and 2021; Clark, 2015b; Dumitru, 2016; Florian, 2018; Geissbühler, 2015; Ioanid, 1997 and 2017; Iordachi, 2014; Lobonț & Stone, 2001; Lobont, 2004; Nastasă-Kovács, 2014; Payne, 1980; Oldson, 1991; Ornea, 1995; Solonari, 2006, 2007 and 2010; Tucan & Pașcălău, 2024; Tudorancea, 2014; Volovici, 1995; Voicu, 2006. A whole issue of *Polis* on antisemitism in Romania was published in 2024 (see especially Iancu; Mihalcea; Neagoe; Rotman). For the underground Jewish resistance in Romania that resulted in some 300,000 Romanian Jews surviving the Holocaust, see I. C. Butnaru, 1993. For the extermination of the Roma population, see Achim, 2004; Matei, 2001. For the role of the church in the Romanian Holocaust, see Hitchins, 1995; Popa, 2017. For the complicity of the local population, see Poliec, 2019. For apologies and denial, see Braham, 1998; Cioflâncă, 2005; Florian, 2009; Shafir 2002, 2011 and 2012. For justice and restitution, see Ionescu Ș., 2025.

[4] For instance, newspapers owned by Jewish people were suspended, all licenses to sell alcohol for Jews in rural areas were annulled, the Jewish journalists lost their train passes, all enterprises were "Romanianized;" by 1939, all Jews lost their citizenship (Cârstocea, 2014a, p. 13).

[5] See also Hausleitner (2013, p. 179) for the installation of Ion Antonescu's government of the National-Legionary State, which meant the purification "of all 'alien' elements." For more on the topic, see Solonari, 2006; Ancel, 2011, pp. 89–105; Beldiman, 2002; Rozen, 2004.

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the first case, there were 1,400 casualties, in the second, 1,902 (Arendt, 1964, p. 191; Deletant, 2006, p. 136). A report of Hauptsturmführer Gustav Richter, Eichmann's customary advisor on Jewish affairs, related Antonescu's wish to liquidate 110,000 Jews into two forests across the Bug River, an idea that horrified the Germans who designated Eichmann to send a letter to the Foreign Office in April 1942 "to stop the unorganized and premature Romanian efforts 'to get rid of the Jews'" (Arendt, 1964, p. 91). Hilberg (2003, p. 759) described Romania's disorganization accompanied by a zeal to kill which was so strong that the Germans had "to restrain and slow down the pace of Romanian measures." Stone elaborated on the experience of the Romanian Jews deported to Transnistria in the autumn of 1941 which "was far removed from what, in the English-speaking world, we think of as the Holocaust;"[6] since Romania failed to negotiate with Germany to send the Jews to the east, Antonescu deported them to Transnistria where they "were abandoned in makeshift camps and ghettos, most of which were open spaces close to the Bug, the border with German-occupied Ukraine, which provided no shelter or other resources."[7] As Dan Stone showed, "[i]n the middle of winter 1941–2, they were left to fend for themselves, often living in animal barns and pigsties, with the result that tens of thousands died of exposure, starvation and disease; having bartered their clothes for food, most were clothed in newspapers and rags, in temperatures as low as minus 40° Celsius" (2023, p. 172). In Transnistria, "[i]n the first few weeks of the occupation, mostly Romanian troops shot thousands of Jews in villages, towns, and cities,[8] then ghettoized the survivors" (Ștefan, 2021, p. 223). The deportations from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Romania's Old Kingdom to Transnistria started in late August 1941 and was followed by mass shootings in several areas, including "Bogdanovka, Domanevka and Akhmetchetka, in the fall and winter of 1941 after some survivors of the Odessa massacre, carried out by Romanian troops, were deported there" (Ștefan, 2021, pp. 223–4).[9]

2. The Division of the World between the West and the East after WW2

After WW2, the world was divided into two spheres of influence. Those who were outside the Iron Curtain had to face their past although this was not an easy task. In 1945, known as *Jahr Null* (Parkes, 1997, p. 148),[10] the German nation's desire was to move forward and to put to rest its Nazi past, with (but also often without) admitting its guilt, which also implied coming to terms with their unmastered past (*unbewältigte Vergangenheit*), a phrase that appeared by 1953 and was changed into *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the late 1950's ("mastering of the past").[11] The influential social theorist Theodor Adorno's public lecture "What Does Working through the Past Mean?" took to task "[t]he attitude that it would be proper for everything to be forgotten and forgiven" (1959/1986, p. 115). It emphasized that if forgetting and forgiveness were proper for those who suffered injustice, they were not adequate

[6] See also Armin Heinen's claim that the Holocaust in Romania means more than "the extermination of Jews in national-socialist death camps" and "bureaucratically organized mass murder" (2007, p. 34).
[7] Raul Hilberg invoked the Eichmann Referat of the RSHA (Reich Security Main Office) of July 26, 1942 reporting the plan "to remove the Jews of Romania in a series of transports beginning approximately September 10, 1942, to the district of Lublin, where the employable segment will be allocated for labor utilization, while the remainder will be subjected to special treatment" (2003, p. 840). Initially Antonescu's government agreed to this plan, but soon refused to carry it out for motives that remain unknown, although "[h]istorians have offered a variety of reasons for this fateful refusal: the snubbing of the Romanian commissar for Jewish affairs in Berlin; the intercession of foreign governments and the papal nuncio; the efforts of Jewish lobbyists; the activities of clandestine Jewish agents; Antonescu's prescient realization that the Nazis would lose" (Stanislawski, 1982, p. xxxii). In this way, similarly to the Jews of Vichy France, Bulgaria, Italy until the fall of Mussolini, and Hungary until the fall of Horthy, Romanian Jews "had a far better chance to survive than the Jews of Poland, the occupied Soviet Union, or Holland" (Stanislawski, 1982, p. xxxii).
[8] This was part of the "Holocaust by bullets," a term coined by Patrick Desbois (2008).
[9] On Transnistria see Carp, 1947; Gligor & Thirer, 2024; Hausleitner et al., 2001; Ornstein, 1945; Rudich, 1945; Shachan, 1996.
[10] See also Buruma, 2013. *Germania anno zero* (1948) was the title of the final film included in Roberto Rossellini's war film trilogy (1948), shot in bombed-out Berlin.
[11] For a discussion on these terms, see Ionescu A., 2017b, pp. 33–5.

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for those who had supported the Nazi and committed injustice. Adorno's contention was that one can work through the past only on condition that the causes of past dramatic events are eliminated. Adorno was not alone to point out such harsh realities. Eric Voegelin expressed his views against the lack of responsibility in assuming a past collective guilt (1999, p. 77). Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's volume *The Inability to Mourn* discussed the depression and melancholy of a nation that projected itself as the war's collateral victim (1975, p. 26). Eric Santner who examined the "traumatically burdened symbolic order" regarded the second and third postwar generations as heirs of deep psychological wounds which were caused by both guilt and its denial (1990, pp. 34; 42). Peter Sichrovsky's volume of interviews *Born Guilty* revealed that many of his interviewees perceived themselves as "the victims of a mentality which […] fostered a fascistic attitude in the home" (1988, pp. 7–8).[12]

In the West, after many debates,[13] with the passing of time, the question *whether* to represent the Holocaust in literature, film, and the visual arts gave way to the issue of *how* to represent it, among others, with a new turning point in Claude Lanzmann's epic film *Shoah* (1985) and the monuments erected in Germany at the end of the 1990's, especially Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and Peter Eisenmann's Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe. Thus, the more global dimension in the inexorable dangers of repression and repetition that were to haunt the old continent for decades to come has been dealt with in the arts. Many 20th-century thinkers and writers (Adorno, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Josh Cohen etc.) have emphasized that the Holocaust was a limit case interrupting the metaphysical and ontological tenets of Western thought and caused a crisis of representation to which only arts found a partial solution, that of bearing witness to the Shoah's interminable working through. In Geoffrey Hartman's view, art, with its licence to escape official meaning, and its performative function, was the most prone medium to transmit communal memory, providing "a counterforce to manufactured and monolithic memory" and, regardless of its recourse to imagination, embodying "historically specific ideas" better than history itself (2004, p. 210).

In the east, those countries that became Soviet Republics or Stalinist satellites were confronted for many decades with another totalitarian regime. In the fifteen Soviet Republics, the Holocaust was a taboo subject for long stretches between 1945 and 1991, since the USSR presented the figure of over 20 million WW2 victims to downplay the Soviet Jewish mortality (over 2 million), transferring the responsibility to the Nazis (Toker, 2013). In Romania, these historical circumstances were not favourable to a thorough discussion on the representation of the Holocaust in the arts or its documentation, although, as will be seen in the next sections, both Holocaust memoirs and fiction were produced.

3. Romania after WW2

In Romania the August 23, 1944 coup was presented to the population as waging war against Germany and to the other former allies as freeing the nation from its former enemies; both domestic and international circumstances were in favour of a fast Stalinization (Georgescu, 1991, pp. 221–31). The armistice in Moscow (12 September 1944) stipulated that Romania had to collaborate with the Soviets within Înaltul Comandament Aliat (the High Allied

[12] For a more detailed presentation of this debate, see Ionescu A., 2017b, pp. 34–7.

[13] See, for instance, Lawrence Langer (1975, 1982, 1980/1988, 1993) on representing and witnessing in survivors' recollections, fiction and poetry, and on questioning the humanistic enterprise of culture beyond the metaphysical groundings of discourse in the wake of the uniqueness and unprecedentedness of this historical "interruption." See Rosenfeld, 1980 for what was considered "misappropriation" of pain and horror in literature (Sylvia Plath's confessional poetry and William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*). For more on the indignation with which Plath's now famed poems "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" were welcomed, and the debates around Roberto Benigni's *La vita è bella*, which "has caused a real maëlstrom since 1997 when it was released, because the audience was shaken, overwhelmed by the humorous way in which the director chose to tell his story," see Ispas, 2020, 52.

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Commandment) to judge war criminals (Tucan, 2020a, 8). The two Tribunale Populare (People's Tribunals) set up in 1945 in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca oversaw judging the crimes on Romanian territory and North Transylvania, respectively.[14] As Dumitru Tucan has shown in an analysis of Andrei Muraru's "Romanian Political Justice," the crimes were real, yet the typical Soviet trial trivialized the Holocaust and presented the crimes against Jewish and Roma citizens as "inhuman treatment against several categories of people," the antifascists and the communists (Tucan, 2020a, 9; Muraru, 2018, p. 110; see also Boboc, 2021; Chiriac, 2017; Clark, 2012; Climescu, 2018; Grec, 2020 and 2023).[15] The number of those condemned differs from one source to another: according to Clark (2012, p. 304), after the "short-lived People's Tribunals tried 2700 individuals suspected of war crimes," the number of those who were condemned was only 668; Muraru's figures are slightly different: 657 people tried by 1947, 1700 convicted by 1949 (2011).

The new cultural directions from Moscow after the Paris Peace Treaty (February 1947) meant outlawing "all Fascist organizations on Romanian territory and 'all other bodies engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda'" (Deletant, 2008, p. 125). After King Michael was forced to abdicate (1947) and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej became the ruler of the Popular Republic of Romania, history was re-written to expose Romania's "rotten imperialism" during WW2; words like "sabotage, treason, exploitation, fascism, chauvinism" (Adamson, 2007, p. 580) became part of an alternative official history. In the age of Dej and that of his successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, speeches were filled with justifications for violence and distorting reality became common practice (see Abraham, 2016; Berindei et al., 2009; Deletant, 1999; Roske et al., 2011–2013; Shafir, 2020; Tismaneanu, 2003).

After the communist takeover, Romania's Jewish population was regarded as "a valuable commodity to be 'traded' to Israel in exchange for either goods or foreign currency;" approximately 110,000 Jews left the country between 1950 and 1952 until the Romanian state banned Jewish emigration after the fall of Ana Pauker in the first major Purge of the Romanian Communist Party (Cârstocea, 2014a, pp. 20–21). Emigration was resumed from 1958 to 1965 when "107,540 Romanian Jews emigrated to Israel" (Ioanid, 2005, p. 93) in exchange not only for money, but also for "agricultural equipment and livestock […] allegedly prompted by Nikita Khrushchev's advice to Dej to avoid direct cash exchanges, as these would damage Romania's reputation if proven abroad" (Cârstocea, 2014a, p. 22). After this period, there was a gradual ideological turn towards "national communism" that became Ceaușescu's official policy between 1965 and 1989 (Cârstocea, 2014a, 20–21). The emigration of former victims helped the rewriting of history. In the absence of those who could testify to what really happened, rhetoricians and historians oversaw the construction of fake narratives. As Paul Ricoeur asserted in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, "even the tyrant needs a rhetorician, a sophist, to broadcast his enterprise of seduction and intimidation in the form of words" (2004, p. 85). The subject of Romania's alliance with Germany was taboo, access to documents covering the period 1941–1944 was barred and a "shameful" campaign of silence followed, sustained by misinformation (Glajar & Teodorescu, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, fascism was conveniently presented as "a predominantly import product," and, while the members of the Legion were featured as "bandits," "hooligans," "assassins," Antonescu's regime was "described through the rhetoric of commination and the state of necessity" (Cioflâncă, 2005, pp. 636–7). Rehabilitating Antonescu was instrumental for Ceaușescu for at least two reasons: first, distancing from any Soviet influence (presenting Antonescu as a leader who fought against the Soviet Union conveyed the message of a self-reliant and independent nation); second, shaping national myths in order to legitimate his own regime. From 1944 to 1989 Romania did not only conveniently conceal its

[14] Some minutes of the trials were published (see Tribunalul Poporului, 1946).
[15] Muraru (2011 and 2018) has done pioneering work on postwar trials, especially those on the crimes from Transnistria. Chiriac (2017) focused on the 1946 trial of the Ion Antonescu group.

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dismaying complicity in Nazi massacres; overall there was a "distortion-effect" consisting in claiming that Romania was coerced into joining the alliance with Germany by pressures exerted by the Reich (Ionescu A., 2017a, p. 178).[16] This rewriting was accompanied by an "anti-Semitic trope resurrected by the communist regime" (Cârstocea, 2014a, p. 20); according to Raphael Vago this was rather a "continuity than a break with the pre-war era" (2010, p. 494).

After 1989, Romania had a lot of wounds to heal, and the more recent history of 45 years of communism was a heavier burden to deal with. The public space focused on recovering the traumas of communism, since there was an urgent need for a reflection on the ideology that had dominated its recent past. As Raul Cârstocea (2020, p. 318) showed,

> [i]n a country where the 1978 American TV miniseries Holocaust that had done so much to popularise the Shoah in Western Europe has never been shown to date but where *The Memorial of Suffering*—a Romanian TV documentary series comprising 140 episodes and 150,000 minutes of footage about the communist repression—ran on prime time television between 1991 and 1996, and intermittently until 2004 (with numerous re-runs), the immediate suffering of Romanians under the communist regime was much more prominent than the distant memory of the Holocaust.[17]

Among the victims of communism were also those guilty of ideological or real crimes during the Holocaust (Romanian officials from the war period, the far-right in general, and the Legionnaires in particular). Recovering the traumatic memory of communism was done indiscriminately. Moreover, the rehabilitation practiced within this anti-communist framework came for all, without clearly discerning between victims and perpetrators. An impressive documentary material containing both direct testimonies and academic works was gathered on the communist prisons of Sighet, Aiud, Pitești, Gherla, Galaţi, Făgăraş, Târgşor, Suceava.[18] These prisons had been filled with the Party's opponents, some of whom had had a fascist past. Yet, for the very reason that they had been "anti-communist martyrs," all those who were tortured in communist prisons were "widely regarded as saints because of the unique spiritual experiences they had in prison" (Clark, 2019). Former members of the far-right ultra-nationalist, antisemitic and anti-capitalist movement Iron Guard and the Antonescu government were thus cleared of their guilt because they spent time, or they died in prison.[19]

Since "the most destructive legacy of Stalinist anti-Semitism was the 'obfuscation of the Holocaust'" (Ionescu A., 2017a, p. 173), remembering this tragedy was difficult:

> Stalin's mystification of the mass murder of the Jews set up the competitive regimes of memory in post-1989 East and Central Europe. On the one hand, for decades the Holocaust had not been remembered and the truth about the genocide of the Jews had remained hidden. On the other hand, the dimensions of the crimes of Stalinism and of the various Communist regimes were only surfacing to their true extent. (Tismăneanu, 2012, p. 85)

[16] See, for instance, Karetki & Covaci's rewriting of the Iaşi Pogrom beyond recognition. They invoked "the Romanian people's militant humanism which prevented, one by one, the Hitlerite plans of mass extermination of Jews in our country" (1978, pp. 21–2).

[17] *Memorialul durerii, documentare semnate*, containing 121 videos has rerun at TVR since November 2024. See Hossu-Longin, 2004 and 2013.

[18] See, for instance, memoirs of the Piteşti prisoners such as Bacu, 1991; Boldur-Lăţescu, 2004 and 2013; Dumitrescu, 1996; Mureşan, 2008 as well as documentary books and articles such as Abraham, 2016; Berindei et al., 2009; Cesereanu, 2005; Corobca, 2020; Deletant, 1995/2015, 1999 and 2019; Demetriade, 2015; Gheorghiţă, 1994; Ierunca, 2008; Ionescu A., 2022; Iovănel, 2021; Ioniţoiu, 2000; Hulber, 2015; Merişca, 1997; Mironescu, 2015; Mitroiu, 2023; Mitroiu & Mironescu, 2024; Muntean, 1997; Popa N., 1999; Popescu, 2000; Roske et al., 2011–2013; Shafir, 2003 and 2020; Simuţ, 2015; Stănescu, 2010; Tismaneanu, 1998 and 2003; Tismăneanu et al., 2007.

[19] For a detailed study on how the Romanian Orthodox Church constructed the biographies of fascist martyrs for canonization as saints, see Biliuţă, 2022.

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Ceaușescu's false history continued to wash Antonescu of his crimes and regarded him as a "patriot," whose main goals were keeping Romania unified and fighting against the Soviets. Showing that unlike the Jews in Romania's eastern provinces who were subjected to mass murder, the Jews of the Old Kingdom (Wallachia and part of Moldavia, except those border zones where pogroms took place – see, for instance, Iaşi and Dorohoi) were only subjected to legal discrimination and administrative oppression, Antonescu's "purification" of Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria (1941–1944) was regarded as a necessity. In this context, several politicians found his execution in June 1946 unjustified. In 1991 Marshall Antonescu was honored in parliament as a martyr with a minute of silence (Balta, 2005, p. 15). According to Shafir, by 2004 there were between 6 and 8 statues and 25 streets and squares in his memory; in Iaşi "the 'Heroes' Cemetery' carried the dictator's name" (2004, p. 146). Nevertheless, this cult ended once Romania sought to join NATO and the European Union (Hausleitner, 2013, p. 186).

After an imposed forgetting between 1945 and 1989, Romania was unable to serve the idea of moral healing, and it often aligned itself to the Eastern European "trivialization of horror" and "banalization of the Holocaust" which Tismăneanu called "the historical and psychological reality of the former communist block" after WW2, where "the essentialization of the Jew as the Other is part of the mythological construction of the East European national identity" (1998, pp. 107; 109).[20] Moreover, several so-called scholars extracted the notion of Holocaust "from its customary register" and used it "to define a different historical experience, with its own specific traits" (Voicu, 2015, p. 285). Such authors who published their "scholarship" in obscure presses with an antisemitic agenda chose metaphors such as "the red Holocaust" (Mătrescu, 1994), "the Holocaust of Romanian culture" (Ungheanu, 1999) or "the Holocaust of the Romanian people" (Buzatu, 1995), thus "usurping" the very notion of Holocaust (see Volovici, 1994, p. 15). Another so-called specialist was Radu Theodoru who was never condemned for his books denying the Holocaust: *Nazismul Sionist* (2000 [1997]), *Mareșalul* (2001), *A fost sau nu Holocaust?* (2003).

Two groups of historians and intellectuals (those interested in Communism, and those interested in the Holocaust) generally worked separately and sometimes were in a debate, often characterized by a lack of empathy with the other's trauma. There was no common ground between what Charles Maier (2002) described as the dichotomy of "the cold memory" (communism) and "hot memory" (fascism) of the European past.

By the time Romania stepped in the new millennium with the strong desire of joining NATO and EU, it was one of the only European countries that had neither admitted its guilt in the Holocaust, nor had it dealt properly with its communist totalitarianism. As a result of international political pressure, in 2003, with the initiative of Romania's president Ion Iliescu, Elie Wiesel, the Nobel laureate for peace, Holocaust survivor and Jewish American writer of Romanian origin, was appointed to preside the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (ICSHR). The results of the scholarly investigation into the persecution and murder of Jewish and the Roma populations and Romania's role in the genocide benefited from the previous work of solid historians from Israel, France, Germany, and the USA (see Braham, 1997). The commission's findings presented in an extensive report in 2004 and published in 2005 estimated that the number of Jews that had been killed in areas under Romanian control was between 280,000 and 380,000 (Ioanid, Friling & Ionescu M.E., 2005, p. 381).

After a lot of pressure, this time coming from the country rather than outside it, in 2006, president Traian Băsescu set up the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (CPADCR), nominating the American political scientist of Romanian origin, Vladimir Tismăneanu, as its president. The main difference between the two reports was that the former had an "ample historical and factual character, whereas the Tismăneanu

[20] On the Jew as an Other, see Barzilai, 2023.

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commission's report had a political-scientific character" (Cesereanu, 2008, p. 272), i.e. it was read in the Romanian Parliament by the country's President. Moreover, there was a more urgent character in the CPADCR imposed by the temporal closeness to the events, hence CPADCR enticed more protests and vociferous boycott "from those representatives of some parties hostile who were not ready to face their communist past, and by the very idea of condemning communism" (Cesereanu, 2008, p. 272).[21] Except for Corneliu Vadim Tudor's Party of Great Romania, otherwise the main opposer of Tismăneanu's *Report* as well, which continued to strongly support Antonescu's rehabilitation yet lost influence after 2008, ICSHR passed almost unnoticed until the newly set up Elie Wiesel Institute became more vocal, emphasizing that it is against the law to praise and honor former perpetrators. The atrocities committed on the Northern Transylvanian territory by Hungarians between 1940 and 1944 were fairly excluded from the ICSHR, since they were not part of Romania at the time. Taking advantage from this exclusion, for some politicians it became convenient to exclude from debates Transnistria, too, since Romania's territory did not include it after WW2. The first President of post-communist Romania, Ion Iliescu (1989–1996, 2000–2004), denied the Holocaust unabashedly on several occasions: in an interview from July 25, 2003, published in the internet version of the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, where he affirmed that "during the Nazi period in Romania Jews and Communists were treated in the same way," and in a communiqué of the Romanian government (June 13, 2003); after a cooperation agreement between the Romanian National Archives and the United States Holocaust Memorial was signed, he "stated categorically that within the borders of Romania there was no Holocaust in the period 1940–45" (see Deletant 2006, p. 273).

Before the new millennium Romania was not only unable to deal with its Holocaust memory but it was among the few countries that practically skipped the Holocaust representation crisis in the arts. Except for Valentina Glajar and Jeanine Teodorescu's edited collection *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust*, there are very few studies on what can be considered Romanian Holocaust literature or art.[22]

4. Works Published and Films Produced in Communist Romania or outside It before 1989

The following part is an attempt to classify and periodize documentary texts and what can be called Romanian Holocaust art.[23] We are classifying these works from a geographical point of view (works produced in and outside Romania) and from a chronological perspective (works produced before and after 1989).

Between 1944 and 1947, before King Michael was forced to abdicate and the communists took the power, numerous publications about the pogroms in Romania and the deportations to Transnistria appeared. These publications had a documentary rather than an artistic value.

Matatias Carp's three-volume history of the Romanian Holocaust, *Cartea Neagră. Suferințele Evreilor din România: 1940–1944* [The black book. The sufferings of the Jews in

[21] See also the reproaches of academic nature in Ernu et al., 2008, especially Michael Shafir's and Gabriel Andreescu's criticism about the improper use of the term "genocide" in some parts of the Report, as well as Tismaneanu & Stan, 2018 describing the conditions in which the Report appeared. For more on the latter, see Ionescu A., 2019.

[22] Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu analyzed the Iași Pogrom in Curzio Malaparte's *Kaputt*, Deborah Schultz discussed Arnold Daghani, Andrei Oișteanu analyzed Mihail Sebastian and Mircea Eliade, Iulia-Karin Patrut discussed Paul Celan's poetry, Emily Miller Budick wrote on Aharon Appelfeld, Teodorescu presented Norman Manea as a Holocaust writer, Domnica Radulescu focused on Elie Wiesel's *Night*.

[23] Among the numerous volumes on Holocaust representation, see Roskies & Diamant, 2013, which is a cartography of Holocaust literature between the "Jew zone" (any part of occupied Europe) and the "free zone" (mainly the United States and Palestine). See critical debates prevailing the first stuttering of what became known as "Holocaust Literature" in Aarons & Lassner, 2020; Bloom, 2004; Bos, 2005; Eaglestone & Langford, 2008; Hofmann et al., 2011; Horowitz, 1997; Gwyer, 2014; Kremer, 1989; Lekht, 2013; McGlothlin, 2006; Budick, 2015; Patterson et al., 2002; Spargo & Ehrenreich, 2009; Rosen, 2013; Sicher, 1985.

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Romania: 1940–1944] is by far the most extended.[24] According to Tucan (2024, p. 383), the "discursive and thematic model" of Carp's book can be found in Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasili Grossman's edited *Чёрная Кни́га* [Black Book], an early effort to document the Nazi massacres from Ukraine (including Odessa), Byelorussia, Russia and the Baltic countries, that was ready in 1945 yet under a publishing ban in USSR.[25] Carp disclosed his intention which was not "revenge" but "justice:" "I want to extract the Jewish pain from the trifle in which it had been sunk so far. I want all people to know the truth, nothing but the truth and the whole truth" (1946, p. 13). The public could hardly access Carp's volumes which were re-edited by Lya Benjamin and Ion Ionescu in 1996, the second edition being almost as inaccessible as the first, since very few copies were printed (Tucan, 2024, p. 384).

F. Brunea-Fox, a journalist and avant-garde writer published his memoir *Orașul Măcelului: Jurnalul Rebeliunei și al Crimelor Legionare* [The city of slaughter: The Memoir of the Rebellion and of the legionary murders.] documenting the murders during the January–February 1941 Rebellion from Bucharest. Tucan (2020b, pp. 216–17) called *Orașul Măcelului* "a documentary diary" since its author goes in the street on January 24, 1941, after the Rebellion, recording what he sees: the mutilated corpses in the Jilava forest, the destruction of the two main Jewish quarters, Dudești and Văcărești. He focused on several Jewish figures such as that of Rabbi Guttman who was not executed but lost his two sons. Related to this volume are M. Rudich's *La braț cu moartea* [Arm in arm with death] (1945), with a Preface written by Brunea-Fox, and Fabius Ornstein's 88-page brochure *Suferințele deportaților în Transnistria: Gândiți-vă la tot ce s-a petrecut în Transnistria* [The sufferance of the deportees in Transnistria: Think of everything that happened in Transnistria] (1945), both documenting the horrors in Transnistria (for more on these, see Tucan, 2024, pp. 386–7). Another journalist, Israel Marcus, published three documentary booklets under the pen name Marius Mircu: *Pogromul de la Iași* [The Iași pogrom] (1944), *Pogromurile din Bucovina și Dorohoi* [The pogroms from Bukovina and Dorohoi] (1945), *Pogromurile din Basarabia și alte câteva întâmplări* [The pogroms from Bessarabia and a few other events] (1947), where he used not only documents but also victims' diaries. The pogroms were also documented by the Jewish community's leaders: Mișu Benvenisti, who served as President of the Zionist Organization between 1941 and 1943, wrote a brochure more neuter in tone, *Sionismul în Vremea Prigoanei* [Zionism during persecution times];[26] S. Cristian, the president of the Jewish community from Iași between 1940 and 1941, wrote a more personal account, *Patru ani de Urgie: Notele unui Evreu din România* [For years of bane: The notes of a Jewish man from Romania], with the hope that publishing documentary materials would help historians to establish the historical truth (1944, p. 5).

Between 1944 and 1945 several books in Hungarian documenting the persecution or deportation of the Jews from Transylvania appeared: *3 év zsidó kényszermunka – A romániai fasizmus fekete napjaiból* [Three years of forced labour: From the black years of Romanian Fascism] (1944) by Sándor Grosz, a Jewish citizen from Timișoara, who served a three-year term in a forced labor camp in the South of Romania, the memoir *Füst* [Smoke] (1945) written by a lawyer from Cluj, Ottó Kornis, Anna Hegedűsné Molnár's, *Miért? Egy deportált nő élményei a sárga csillagtól a vörös csillagig* [Why? The experiences of a deported woman from the yellow star to the red star], Béla Katona's *Várad a viharban* [Oradea during the storm] (1945) detailing how the Jewish community from Oradea was destroyed, and Gréda József's volume of poetry *Fogózz a semmibe* [Hung from nothingness] (1945).

[24] Carp had been a secretary of the Federation of the Union of Jewish Communities in Romania from 1940 to 1942 and a close collaborator of its president, Wilhelm Filderman (Tucan, 2024, p. 382).
[25] A significant part of the first volume of Ehrenburg & Grossman's *Чёрная Кни́га* appeared in 1946 at Institutul Român pentru Documentare (The Romanian Institute for Documentation), which was a communist affiliated press. Grossman's notebook including personal letters and documents was published in French (2008).
[26] These were published in four issues of *Viața Evreească*: *Sionismul în vremea prigoanei* (1944) (Tucan, 2024, p. 389).

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Also very important are those witnesses who were in what Primo Levi called the "gray zone," "the zone of prisoners who, to some extent, maybe for worthy purposes, had collaborated with the authorities" (2015, p. 2418). This was what Levi called a "'laboratory:' the hybrid category of inmate-functionaries," a space with "undefined contours, which both separates and connects the two opposing camps of masters and servants" (Levi, 2015, p. 2435), that included Kapos or other people that the Nazi used in the concentration camps. Dórei Ferencz's *Kápó voltam* detailed the experiences of a Kapo whose collaboration brought only short-lived privileges, and Miklós Nyiszli's *Dr. Mengele boncolóorvosa voltam az auschwitzi krematóriumban*, those of a doctor who was recruited by Mengele in Auschwitz as part of the "Sonderkommando." Its English translation *I Was Doctor Mengele's Assistant: The Memoirs of an Auschwitz Physician* appeared much later, and it was not a translation from the original Hungarian but a retranslation of the Polish version. The volume presents shattering experiences that Nyiszli also presented in the Nüremberg Trial in 1947:

> I, the undersigned, Dr Miklos Nyiszli, physician and former prisoner of Auschwitz concentration camp No A-8450, testify that as an eyewitness employed at the Birkenau crematoria and pyres that devoured millions of fathers, mothers and children have written my account of this, the darkest chapter of human history, according to the truth, objectively, without any exaggeration or embellishment. (Nyiszli, 2010, p. 5)

Other documentary accounts had mainly the purpose of commemorating the victims, in the tradition of yizkor books; they were categorized by Tucan (2024, p. 388) as "reports, lists of the deceased, propagandistic brochures, volumes of 'inquiries', homages to 'the martyrs:'" a register of the victims of the Legionary Rebellion, *Crimele Legionarilor* [The Legionaries' murders], a memorial volume dedicated to Iancu and Iosif Guttman who perished in the massacre of the Jilava forest, Eliezer Fraenkel's *Problema Evreiască* [The Jewish question], Aurel Baranga's *Ninge peste Ucraina* [It snows over Ukraine], written in the first person but documenting not what happened to the narrator but to victims who testified in the trials in 1945, and I(sac) Ludo's *Din ordinul cui?* [From whose order?] which documented the implication of Romanian authorities in the Iași Pogrom.

Most of these publications were later placed in libraries' secret documentary sections and never reedited before the 1990's (Tucan, 2020a, p. 12) because the communist party's goals were not to disclose what happened but trivialize, hide, and rewrite the Holocaust.[27]

Some works published in communist Romania were either released to the public for ideological reasons, as in the case of Sergiu Lezea's *Vapniarca: Lagărul Morții* [Vapniarca: The death camp], Matei Gall's *Masacrul* [The massacre],[28] and Maur Săveneanu's *Evreul Ion*

[27] The history of communist censorship in Romania begins with the Armistice Convention, signed in Moscow on September 12, 1944. Article 16 of the Convention stipulated that "the printing, import, and distribution in Romania of periodical and non-periodical publications […] will be carried out in agreement with the High Allied (Soviet) Command." The next step came after the establishment of the first communist government, with the introduction of Article II, Decret-Lege nr. 134 [Decree-Law no. 364], published in *Monitorul Oficial* (1945), which mandated the "withdrawal of several periodical and non-periodical publications, graphical and plastic reproductions, films, records, medals and metallic badges." Initially, the targets were cultural products containing "Legionary, fascist, Hitlerist, chauvinistic, racist ideas or passages harmful to Romania's good relations with the United Nations". By 1948, the first secret, internally circulated brochure listing publications banned by the Ministry of Arts and Information was already in use (see Frunză, 2003). By 1949, the concept of "secret library funds" referring to the removal of undesirable titles from public access had emerged (Costea et al., 1995, pp. 7–8). Books about the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust were not initially included on the lists of banned publications. However, during the 1950's, the circulation and public access to such works became increasingly restricted. This shift was closely tied to the resurgence of antisemitism in the USSR and its satellite states (see Rapoport, 1990; Szaynok, 2002). Antisemitism was officially rebranded as anti-Zionism, a reaction to Israel's refusal to align with Soviet policies. Romania followed this agenda (Ioanid, 2005), banning Zionist-oriented titles that addressed Jewish identity (Costea et al., 1995, pp. 81–2). As part of this policy, books about the Holocaust also fell under censorship.

[28] On Gall's *Masacrul*, his previous testimonies about Vapniarka and Rîbnița published in *România liberă* in 1944–5, and his postcommunist book, see Ionescu Ş. & Mihăilescu, 2023.

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Ionescu [The Jew Ion Ionescu], or skipped censorship, as in the case of Arnold Dagani's *Groapa e în Livada de Vișini* [The grave is in the cherry orchard].[29] Sergiu Lezea, a member of the Communist Party, who was to become an adept of realist socialism in literature, was among the Jewish communists from Bessarabia, Bukovina and Odessa who had been interned in Vapniarka; he tagged the victims as "antifascist," without mentioning their Jewish origin (Tucan, 2024, pp. 402–3). Săveneanu's protagonist is an antisemite Christian student who sympathizes with the Iron Guard yet is sent to do forced labor because his mother is Jewish (although baptized). Săveneanu goes as far as ending the novel with a sort of epiphany of the protagonist who declares his adhesion to the communist movement (Tucan, 2024, p. 403). Lezea's and Săveneanu's texts became instrumental for the rewriting of history that we dealt with briefly at the beginning of this article. They served the purpose of history compendiums written later as part of Ceaușescu's massive project of producing alternative histories such Ioan Scurtu's in the 1980's, which blamed Hitlerite Germany for subordinating Romania to its interests of Germany (for a synthesis on history compendiums and textbooks during Ceaușescu, see Ionescu A., 2017a, p. 176).

In 1945 Sergiu Dan published *Unde începe Noaptea* [Where the night starts], "the most ambitious fictional project" of the immediate period after WW2, documenting the persecution and the deportation of the Jewish population from Romania (Tucan, 2024, p. 399). The night that Dan metaphorically invokes in his title is equated to a moment of blindness in his fellows' lives; they are incapable of seeing how evil penetrates their lives. There are two phases in which the night starts: first, his fellow-Jews lose their jobs, their properties, then they are shot during the Bucharest pogrom in 1941, second, they are deported to a camp in Transnistria, Romanovka, where they face starvation and insalubrious conditions, falling ill and dying, also being threatened by executions. One year later, Isac Peltz's *Israel Însângerat* [Bloody Israel] was published. Tucan (2024, p. 401) has examined its structure and, taking into account that the main character Israel Schwadron looks like an alter ego of the writer, concluded that although the novel was written between August 1944 and September 1945, it "seems to be a construction that was sketched earlier and adapted to 'speak' directly about the recent tragedy of the Holocaust." The second part reconstructs the persecution of the Jews, the Bucharest and Iași Pogroms, and the deportations to Transnistria.

In the 1940's, works were also produced outside communist Romania. Curzio Malaparte's *Kapput* deals with the memories of Malaparte who visited Iași as a war correspondent and gave an account of the 1940's pogroms in which he disclosed that while the official communiqué mentioned five hundred dead, Colonel Lupu later confirmed seven thousand people dead (Malaparte, 2005, p. 102). The Iaşi Pogrom is described in the chapters "The Rats of Jassy," and "Cricket in Poland." In "The Rats of Jassy," the victims' bodies are plundered by an enraged crowd, while the Italian consul protests to no avail. Sartori, "Malaparte's main source of information," who was the Italian Consul had otherwise succeeded in providing a "sanctuary for several Jews" (Gheorghiu 2011, p. 49). Sartori went with a young Italian war correspondent, Pellegrini, and Malaparte to Podul Iloaiei, in search of the body of a Jewish lawyer who had been protected by the Italians, hoping that they could save some of the Jews locked in the train, yet at the opening of the doors he was buried under corpses. In terms of representation, Gheorghiu has shown that the 1999 Romanian translation of this work not only minimized this literary testimony but also ignored the previous translation and denigrated the author. In the Afterword, Eugen Uricaru placed "Malaparte among the 'so-called writers who look disdainfully at us'" (Malaparte, 1999, pp. 301–2; see Gheorghiu, 2011, p. 50).

Arnold Daghani's camp diary, written in English, was first published in Romania as *Groapa e în Livada de Vișini* (1947) and then hidden from the public (Tucan, 2020a, p. 12).

[29] Daghani's name is transliterated as Dagani in Romanian.

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The German translation, *Lasst mich leben!*, was published in 1960, and the original English text *The Grave Is in the Cherry Orchard* was finally released in 1961. The diary describes the life of Daghani, and his wife, Anişoara Rabinovici. Daghani was born into a German-speaking Jewish family in Suczawa, Bukovina, now Suceava in Romania. After Bukovina's annexation by the Soviet Union, the couple relocated to Cernăuţi, the regional capital of Bukovina (formerly the Austro-Hungarian Czernowitz, now Chernivtsi in Ukraine). In June 1942, Daghani and Anna were deported to a slave labor camp at Mikhailowka where Daghani "began to both paint and write, aware that he would be punished if it became known that he was making a record of the ordeals of the camp" (Schultz, 2011, p. 94). The couple survived and returned to Romania in March 1944. The grave invoked in the title refers to the liquidation of the lager on December 10, 1943, when approximately five hundred victims were buried in a cherry orchard. To write in a lager, where victims had no access to paper, pencil, or ink was hard. As Tucan (2024, p. 394) revealed, Daghani was allowed to make drawings and paintings for several lager administrators and managed to save approximately fifty drawings and paintings, sixteen of which were reproduced in black and white in the diary.[30]

While memoirs like *Groapa e în Livada de Vișini* were hidden from the public and other memoirs could not be published, Oliver Lustig's individual and collective works saw publication in communist Romania for ideological reasons. Born in Șoimeni, a village from Cluj, which at the end of August 1940 was annexed to Hungary under the Horthy Government, Lustig presented his family's story of deportation and killing in concentration camps and accused those who destroyed his family who were Hungarians. Before Ceaușescu took the power, Lustig published *Însemnări din preajma Crematoriului* [Notes around the crematorium] (1957) and *Din Umbra Crematoriului* [In the shadow of the crematorium] (1960). He was much more prolific in Ceaușescu's period.

5. Works Published and Films Produced in Communist Romania or outside It before 1989

"The protracted years between 1971 and 1989, ironically called 'epoca de aur' (the golden age), marked by an increasingly brutal and repressive regime," represented "one of the darkest ages in Romanian history, during which people's homes felt as secure as open prisons" (Ionescu A., 2014, p. 57). We tentatively divide Romanian Holocaust writings into three main directions: the first was within a national-Ceaușist key (Ioan Grigorescu, Lustig, Marin Preda); the second was represented by texts that revived antisemitism (Eugen Barbu, Adrian Păunescu, Ion Lăncrănjan), the third was an indirect way of emphasizing the responsibility of the Romanian state for the Holocaust (Norman Manea). While the first two directions were clearly part of Ceaușescu's political agenda, the third one was disapproved by his regime.

[30] Daghani's visual art that documents his traumatic experiences can be included in a series of materials produced by artists in Transnistria. See also Olga Ștefan's movie (2022) on drawings, personal testimonies, poetry and songs from Vapniarka. Deborah Schultz and Edward Timms (2009) edited the extended version of this illustrated diary. Among several texts on Transnistria, we can mention those of Paul A. Shapiro who started his research on Vapniarka after the archive of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen, Germany was finally opened for research in 2008 (see Shapiro, 2013), some German wartime documents relating to Vapniarka published in Trașcă & Deletant, 2007, a detailed account on forced labor in Transnistria (Achim, 2015), a volume of testimonies (Ioanid, Kelso & Cioabă, 2009) and an edited volume containing documents from Rîbnița (Gligor & Thirer, 2024). For more accounts on Transnistria and Bukovina, see Carare, 2010; Deletant, 2004; Ionescu V., 2000; Iordachi, 2004; Ofer, 1996; Teich, 1958. Ștefan's ongoing research (2021) revealed the unpublished memoirs by Simon Bughici (1975), and Adalbert Rosinger (1978). The latter was published later on (see Rosinger & Rozenberg, 2022). Ștefan (2024a, pp. 6–7) mentions, among others, several unpublished testimonies written by Esther Gonda Maghyar, Asia Moraru, Margareta Gall, Eugene Friedlander, Iosif Blumenfeld, Rado Alexandru, and Zalman Broder. She also included Anna Sten's journal (1960) and a short story (1970) that she discovered in 2023 at the Leo Baeck archives; several women survivors who "held high-ranking positions in the post-war regime" never wrote about their Vapniarka experiences: Ida Felix, Ernestina Orenstein [later Chivu], Ghizela Vass, and Ofelia Manole (Ștefan, 2024a, p. 8). Ștefan mentions Dr. Arthur Kessler's *Ein Arzt Im Lager* (1946) edited by Leo Spitzer, whose English translation was forthcoming when she was writing her article (2024b, p. 5). The account, published in English in 2024, will be summarized in Part 2.

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In 1965, when Ceaușescu became the president of Socialist Romania, Ioan Grigorescu published *Obsesia*. Made up of nine stories on the Holocaust, it was not related to what happened in Romania but had to prove how dark fascism was. One of the stories "Întâlnirea," relating a post-War encounter between a former Auschwitz Polish prisoner (Staszek) and an SS soldier (Adolf Gebauer) who used Staszek to improve his boxing skills in the camp, was transformed into a film, *Ringul* [The boxing ring], by film director Sergiu Nicolaescu (1985). Nicolaescu became the most popular Romanian movie director, approved by the state, since he helped the Romanian communist government to maintain the idea of the nation's superior mastery. When Ceaușescu came to power, Holocaust denial followed, accompanied by antisemitism promoted by the official party writers.

Lustig's works were publishable under the Ceaușescu's regime for two main reasons: they clearly marked a process of de-Dejification and contained many Marxist references which were in accordance with the regime's ideology. We list his works (some co-written) here in chronological order: *Viața în Imperiul Morții, Roman* [Life in the empire of death] (1969), *Atunci, Acolo... la Auschwitz* [Then, there … at Auschwitz] (1977), *Cronică în Marș* [A chronicle on the move] (with Bejancu, 1978), *Destin Blestemat* [Cursed fate] (1980), *Dicționar de Lagăr: Amintiri din Lagărul de la Birkenau* [A concentration camp dictionary: Memories from the Birkenau camp] (1982), re-edited in postcommunism under the title *Limbajul Morții* [The language of death] (1990), *Teroarea Horthysto-Fascistă în Nord-Vestul României: Septembrie 1940 – Octombrie 1944* [The Horthyite-Fascist terror in Northwestern Romania: September 1940–October 1944] (with Fătu et al., 1985), *Martorii n-au Dreptul să Tacă, Roman* [Witnesses do not have the right to be silent: A novel] (1986), *Jurnal însângerat, Roman* [Blooded diary, a novel] (1987). [31]

Marin Preda's *Delirul* [The delirium] (1975) described, among other events, the Legionary Rebellion, followed by the January 1941 Pogrom from Bucharest, putting Marshall Antonescu and his army in a favorable light. Shafir pointed out that Preda "by no means defended the Marshal's policies towards the Jews and no trace of anti-semitism is to be found in the book. On the contrary, in one of the more convincing passages, Antonescu's peasant mother warns him against the consequences of such German-inspired, unchristian crimes" (1983, p. 229). Moreover, he added that extremely reliable sources, which he nevertheless did not disclose in his article, informed him that Preda had the approval of the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee's ideological commission (Shafir, 1983, p. 229), which means that the rehabilitation of Antonescu was a policy of Ceaușescu's regime.

While works like Grigorescu's and Lustig's suggested that there was no Holocaust inside the Romanian borders, and Preda presented Antonescu as a national hero, other texts revived antisemitism. Although placed in the Phanariot-times Romanian principalities, Eugen Barbu's allegorical novel *Principele* [The Prince] (1971) "depicts the not-less-Byzantine Dejist court. The Machiavellian spirit pushing the local ruler to act against the best interests of his fellow-countrymen is never fully identified, but one cannot but remark that Barbu's villain is surrounded by Hebrew inscriptions whenever he indulges in black magic, that he addresses his prayers to 'El, Elohem, Elohe Zebaoth, Escerchie, Adonai, Jah, Tetragramaton, Saday,' and that he masters the secrets of Hebrew numerology" (Shafir, 1983, p. 228). After this antisemitic public act, Barbu became "the regime's scapegoat," and was dismissed from his post as the editor-in-chief of the Writers' Union weekly *Luceafărul* at the insistence of a group of young writers; he blamed for this Paul Goma, one of his protégés "who allegedly had been 'bought by the Jewish mafia'" (Shafir, 1983, p. 228).

Another "star" of the regime was Adrian Păunescu, the poet who had started as its opponent, but soon turned into an admirer of Ceaușescu and his "court troubadour and

[31] See also his subsequent works from the post-communist era: Lustig (ed.), 2003; Lustig, 2004 and 2007.

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occasional personal companion;" he became the editor-in-chief of the Bucharest weekly *Flacăra,* to which he was appointed in 1973, and also the founder of Cenaclul *Flacăra* [the *Flacăra* Circle of Revolutionary Youth], where people had "song and poetry sessions," whose exaltation reminded also of "the League of Archangel Michael, albeit in more spontaneous a form" (Shafir, 1983, p. 230). Tismăneanu and Mircea Mihăieş's description of the bard is quite evocative:

> As Ceausescu became increasingly paranoid, so did Păunescu's overblown metaphors: his lines worshipped the Conducător as the ultimate embodiment of Romania's destiny. For Păunescu, Ceausescu's name was synonymous with the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube, the shepherd of the "chosen nation," as the national-Stalinist depicted the increasingly despondent Romanian populace. "You, Ceausescu, erected schools and universities, not jails," chanted the national bard to a hysterical audience in horrendously staged pageants. And the hypnotized, moronized youth repeated, for more than a decade, these aberrations. The mindboggling show did not have a parallel in the whole Soviet bloc, not even in Yevtushenko's depressing kowtowing to the Brezhnevite gerontocracy. (1998, 92, p. 94)

Păunescu was an antisemite but "of higher intellectual quality," who occasionally hid his predicaments "under pseudo philo-semitic pronouncements," as proven, for instance, by a poem dedicated to folklorist Hary Brauner, where he spoke about those Jews who considered themselves Romanians and those who did not (Shafir, 1983, p. 230). Păunescu went as far as publishing poetry that contained "typical legionary hagiography or terminology, invoking in a veiled manner the figure of The Captain," Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Shafir, 1983, p. 237).

Ion Lăncrăjan's *Fiul Secetei* [Son of drought] (1979) was deemed by Shafir as "the most blatant and vulgar form of anti-semitism to appear in the Romanian postwar fiction," because apart from the reaction to the role played by people such as Pauker, Chişinevschi or Roller during the 1950's (which he had already emphasized in *Caloianul* [1977]), it gave "vent to the author's (hitherto only suspected) sympathies for the Iron Guard movement and to a morbid hatred of Jews and what they stereotypically represent" (Shafir, 1983, p. 230). The main negative hero, an "odious figure," who had helped stage show-trials upon his arrival from a foreign neighboring state, is Mihail Şafranovici Cionoff, "alias Walter, alias Petrushka" (Lăncrăjan, 1979, pp. 203, 681), "a name unmistakably identifying this villain with the Jewish-Bessarabian communists of the early Dejist period" (Shafir, 1983, p. 232).

While still in Romania, Norman Manea published *Noaptea pe Latura Lungă* [Night on the long side] (1969), *Primele Porţi* [The first gates] (1975), several stories such as "Pulovărul" [The sweater], "Ceaiul lui Proust" [Proust's tea], "Nunțile" [The weddings] included in *Octombrie, Ora Opt* [October, eight o'clock] (1981), which described the Holocaust obliquely.[32] In an interview with Elianna Kan (N.D.), Manea related that his first story was published in 1966 "in a small, avant-garde magazine which was banned after five issues;" although he was a member of the Writers' Union in Romania, he "was not the typical, official Socialist writer:" "My books were not in the frame of the Socialist Realism of the time so I ran into problems with the censors, editors, and so on." Even if these were only an indirect way of placing the responsibility on the state, as Claudiu Turcuș showed, they "brought him into conflict with the political power," and "his anti-Protochronist stance, his plea in favor of democracy, followed by his denunciation of nationalist anti-Semitism led to violent calumnies against him in the propaganda publications (like *Săptămâna*, *Flacăra* and *Luceafărul*)" (2016, p. 19). The "government persecution and the receipt of a DAAD grant from Germany led to Manea's emigration in 1986, and in 1988, he came to the

[32] The short stories from *Octombrie, ora opt* are veiled Holocaust depictions and a critique of communism; they mark one of the earliest accounts of how young children were traumatized by the Holocaust, contributing to those who opened up the category of child survivors for analysis, something that psychoanalysts were just then starting to find out. See Mihăilescu, 2013.

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U.S. on a Fulbright Scholarship before becoming a professor and writer in residence at Bard College" (see Kan, ND).

Before 1989, we identified a single Romanian film that remains associated with the Holocaust, although it does not directly address it: Manole Marcus's *Actorul şi Sălbaticii* [The actor and the wild people] (1975), which contrasts the mystic-violent image of the Legionnaires with the humanity of the characters Caratase (inspired by the renowned actor Constantin Tănase) and Ionel Friedman (inspired by Tănase's Jewish text writer, Ion Pribeagu / Isac Lazarovici). Through an explicit portrayal of the victim character Friedman, and the antithesis that reflects the historical violence of the pre-WW2 era, the film raises the issue of antisemitism and the associated political ideologies (Nazism and the Romanian fascism of the Legionnaire movement).

(to be continued in Part 2)

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